

# THE WIRE

adventures in modern music

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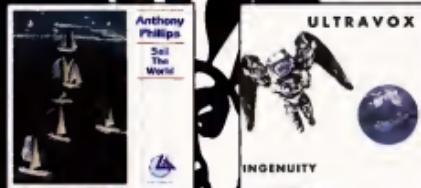
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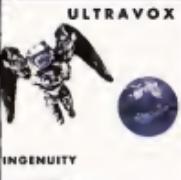
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your monthly exploration of new music

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A guide to the music compiled on your 16 track Resurgence CD, FREE with this month's issue of *The Wire*



# resurgence

## **Jakko** — The Hands Of Che Guevara

From Kingdom Of Dust (RES 101 CD)

Guitarist and vocalist Jakko Jakszyk has collaborated with Henry Cow's John Greaves in The Lodge, and with bassist Danny Thompson and a host of Indian musicians in early 80s Indo-fusion outfit Dzithryma. 1994's Kingdom Of Dust album was created by overdubbing guitar parts onto tracks recorded earlier by Japan's Richard Barbieri, Steve Jansen and Mick Karn.

## **Anthony Phillips** — Wildlife Choir

From Soi The World (RES 102 CD)

Responsible — or perhaps that should read guilty — for co-founding Genesis in 1967, Anthony Phillips has spent the last 25 years combining music study and teaching with a career as a composer of theme music for various films and TV programmes. Soi The World, one of many solo albums since 1977, collects Phillips's soundtrack to a Meridian TV documentary of the Whitbread Round The World Yacht Race.



## **Bill Nelson**

### **Jakko** — Then And Now

From Mustard Gas And Roses (RES 103 CD)

Jakko's second solo album, released in 1994, again features the Jansen/Barber/Karn axis, orbited this time by BJ Cole, Sam Brown and Danny Thompson, who contributes double bass to this duet.

## **Bill Nelson** — Crimsworth

(extract 3:41-5:50)

From Crimsworth (RES 104 CD)

Despite his status as a genuine pioneer of meditative Ambient soundscaping, Bill Nelson's activities have remained

relatively subterranean since his debut with the group Bebop Deluxe in 1977. Recorded in 1994, the long-form piece Crimsworth was written to accompany an installation piece, and inspired by a mysterious landscape of the same name.

## **Holl** — Lonely Swan

From Under The Monkey Puzzle Tree (RES 105 CD)

Oriental pop goes multinational on this, the debut UK album from singer Holl. A star in her own right in Japan, and a contributor to Eno & U2's *Passengers* album, Under The Monkey Puzzle Tree allows her to follow less commercial interests alongside fellow travellers Steve Jansen and Mick Karn.

## **Boon** — The Tin Man

From Tinman (RES 106 CD)

Ex-Level 42 songwriter in sky-kissin' multi-track guitar scenario! After years spent hibernating in the hermetic environment of a Devonshire castle, Boon emerges in 1996 with his first solo album.

## **BJ Cole** — Eastern Cool

From The Heart Of The Moment (RES 107 CD)

From The Walker Brothers' 1960 hit "No Regrets", through sessions with Bjork, Harold Budd and John Cale, to The Orb's 1995 *Drives Terrarium* LP, BJ Cole has



Beon



always been a highly sought-after provider of atmospheric ambience via his pedal steel guitar. Last year's *Heart Of The Moment* features Cole's own group, Transparent Music Ensemble.

### **Peter Knight & Danny Thompson — No 1**

(exact 2.58-5.28)  
from Peter Knight & Danny Thompson (RES 108 CD)

A meeting of the spirits between the violinist of celebrated folkies Steeleye Span and ubiquitous bassist Danny Thompson. This extract is taken from a transcendental, completely improvised studio encounter in 1994.

### **Ultravox — Ingenuity**

(Innuendo (RES 109 CD)

In the light of the 'Rome revival', perhaps it's not so surprising that 15 years after the number one hit 'Venus', there is still a group trading under the name Ultravox. Fronted by founder and ex-Visage-member Billy Currie following the departure of Midge Ure, the live five-piece assembled on *Innuendo* continue the group's pop-futurist depictions of millennial angst.

### **Jakko — Dangerous Dreams**

(from Are My Ears On Wrong?

(RES 110 CD)

Produced by Dave Stewart and featuring vocals from Barbara Gerkin, "Dangerous Dreams" is taken from a new Jakko LP, out this month.

### **Bill Nelson — Begin To Burn**

(from My Secret Studio box set (RES 711 CD)

This year sees the release of a four CD box, comprising as many years' worth of 'spontaneous tape compositions', all recorded in Nelson's loft studio in his Yorkshire home. Distilled from over 300 pieces, these reveal a period of emotional upheaval and growing obsession with Eastern philosophy and mysticism, alchemy, sacred geometry and global arcanas.

BJ Cole



Robert Wyatt

### **John Greaves & Robert Wyatt — Kew Rhone**

(from Songs (RES 112 CD)

John Greaves's work with Henry Cow, National Health, Michael Nyman, Peter Blugad and The Lodge placed him at the heart of the 70s Prog scene, yet despite this he remains one of the UK's most neglected underground songwriters and vocalists. 95's Songs attempts to rectify this, and includes guest appearances from Robert Wyatt, Elton Dean, David Cunningham, Gong's Mireille Bauer and more.

### **Culturemix with**

#### **Bill Nelson — Luna Park**

(from Culturemix (RES 113 CD)

Culturemix is a synthetic, multicuts encounter between Bill Nelson and Tokyo-born pop singer Yumiko Morioka, drawing on Nelson's experience as producer for Yellow Magic Orchestra and Japan, and Morioka's interest in ethnic music, eco-politics and natural phenomena.

### **Bill Nelson — Flipside**

(from After A Satellite Sings (RES 114 CD)

The latest outpourings from the ever-churning mechanisms of Nelson's studio are to be released in April this year. Here's an exclusive foretaste featuring breakbeats, vocals and multi-instrumentalism to full effect.

### **No Man — Babyship Blue**

(from Heaven's Taste (HI-ART 7 CD)

### **No Man with Robert Fripp — Angelclust**

(from Flowermix (HI-ART 2 CD)

No Man's cutefrom pop structures have been variously enhanced by collaborators with a selection of frontmen Tim Bowness's musical heroes and a forthcoming batch of Ambient remixes. On these two tracks, Bowness and musical partner Stephen Wilson (also of neo-Progsters Porcupine Tree) put themselves into the hands of, respectively, Japan's rhythmetexture section, and the veteran King Crimson guitarscaper

NB We regret that due to licensing restrictions, this month's free CD is only available to UK readers.

Contributors **Sylvain Baudrand, Jake Barnes, Mike Barnes, Dean Belcher, Oliver Bell, Chris Blackwell, Chris Cargill, Linton Chirwick, Robert Clark, Louis Coadwell, Richard Cook, John Corben, Peter Cushing, Phil England, Kevine Edwards, Matt Empson, Matt Hynde, Louise Gray, Andy Hamilton, Steve Jeffery, Mark Hepburn, David Ede, Tim Head, Edwyn Collins, Nick Hill, Mark Hollis, Alan Hull, Howard Mandel, K Martin, Paul Mayberry, Andy McBurney, Will Montgomery, Eddie Mowatt, Ian Parham, Edwin Peacock, Simon Reynolds, Tom Ridge, Jonathan Rimmer, Paul Shilling, Richard Scott, Peter Shapiro, Chaka Shamy, Paul Staker, Paul Stenner, Jilly Tarzwell, David Tipp, John T. Walker, Ben Watson, Barry Witherden, Robert Tait**

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Cover photograph of Tortoise **Dean Belcher**

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# letters

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Every letter published wins a FREE CD

## A clown called Walker

Look, I know how easy it is to whinge about other people's musical tastes. It can all so soon descend into an NME letters-style squabble at the Blur vs Oasis level of fance. As a retard who is not too embarrassed to think back to punk once in a while, I'd have thought that most other music addicts now in their mid-thirties will recall that perhaps the most liberating thing about punk was Steve Jones swearing on TV or Joe Strummer telling us that about a burst condom called Johnny Rotten, it was the simple fact that punk allowed us to come 'out' and say that our sad burgeoning teenage collections of Led Zeppelin, Genesis, Yes and Supertramp LPs weren't as much fun as we'd pretended to each other. That is — punk was ALL about being HONEST. It may be sad, but it's a philosophy some of us still try to adhere to. Hearing a piece of music and being able to say 'hated it, even if it was by some supposedly talented muso millionaire'. Or that you loved a song despite the fact that it was sung by a bunch of scroffs who were as bewildered by the layout of a guitar as a gaggle of Japanese tourists on the London Underground.

OK, having babbled all that, here goes. So, you reckoned Scott Walker's *Till* was one of the three best albums of 1996? Fair enough. Interesting viewpoint. Does that mean you actually play a lot?

Honesty? You're sitting there listening to some wonderful new stuff by Autograph or Mouse On Mars or Plasticman or whoever, and you're all the time thinking, 'I'd really much rather be listening to *Till*.' Amazing. I find it hard to believe, isn't it, just that you ADHIRE the fact that one of the greatest voices in pop music suddenly decided to whine out a load of sentences seemingly taken at random from Finnegan's Wake, backed by what sounds

like The Portsmouth Sinfonia or Henry Cow on a bad day? Please, tell me the name of the magazine you cited who rated *Till* one of the worst albums of the 90s so far — I think I want to subscribe.

Love — you're one of the most essential mags ever

**Pippa Legg** Lyndhurst, Hampshire

## Buck up

On your recommendation I went to see Tortoise at the Thekla, Bristol. You will pardon my language, but what is this shit? Are you sloping or something? The label 'Krautrock' has been bandied about unthinkingly as sad band, who are little more than the upside down of sad genre. They resemble one of those awful bands who were signed to Virgin in the wake of Gong and Tangerine Dream. Usually they were called something like Topaz, and were even less focused and inventive than either of the above. They would turn up supporting Beefheart or Kevin Coyne and piss me off. Even in these desperate times, we do not want them coming back. In those days they were all hippies in woolly hats who came from a nice town and indulged in 'hymical humour'. Nowadays they look like simian faced lab technicians. They're probably all called Greg.

Every now and again they managed to sound like Faust going off the boil, but for nine-tenths of the time they did clever-stuff-like stopping and starting in odd places (second only to the drum solo as a musical semaphore for 'we haven't got two ideas to rub together').

There is an art to this kind of thing, and it was best defined by Can's Irmin Schmidt. He used to shut up when he didn't know what the hell else to do. Tortoise seemed to think that, when you have an idea, you flag it to death. Maybe they're not a new band. Maybe they

actually were on Virgin in 1976 and travel really slowly, in time Tortoise by name and Tortoise by nature.

**Elliot Rogers** Newport

Hope you enjoy this month's cover feature, Elliot — Ed'

## Hacking the Krokers

Although I can appreciate the Krokers' outlook on the night that we put on with Robin Rimbaud (Global Ear, The Wire 144), I do feel that for the most part it was misrepresentative, perhaps better to suit the theme of their new book. The club referred to as 'No Innocence' is actually called Angels. Every Wednesday we host a night called Freezer which is a forum for local and international acts and DJs to play out the latest in down-tempo Electronica, drum 'n' bass, dub, Techno, etc. — Angels is not, as the Krokers would have you believe, 'a 21st century medieval bar gone recombinant', nor is it a haven for heroin refugees hiding in blue smoke-filled light (although suffice it to say many a split-second in the DJ booth) Freezer is simply an intimate gathering of diverse musical minds in a comfortable listening environment, who are more often found drinking beer and eating popcorn than marinating in the bathrooms.

If anyone is passing through Montreal and is interested in playing or attending Freezer, or would like information regarding my label Discreet/Indiscreet, please don't hesitate to contact me at 514 843 3525 or fax 514 843 7688. **Jeff Waye (DJ Wig)** [discreet@generation.net](mailto:discreet@generation.net)

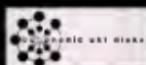
"Gathering of diverse musical minds in a comfortable listening environment"? Beer and popcorn? The Krokers made it sound so much sever — Ed'

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# global ear

## Marrakesh

Alighting from the Marrakesh Express, Frank Rynne and Joe Ambrose, producers of the 1995 Master Musicians Of Joujouka CD *Joujouka Black Eyes*, and myself are hustled into an illegal taxi. It careers along Boulevard Mohamed V, the main arterial route through Marrakesh, stopping only at the beckon of the police and to unceremoniously dump us behind the largest and oldest Mosque in the city, beyond which is the Place Djemma El Fna, the Place of the Mosque at The End of the World — the spiritual and musical heart of Marrakesh. It was there that we spent seven nights and days in the company of a group of Sufi street musicians,

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

musicians like Bill Laswell and Jimmy Page and Robert Plant have made pilgrimages looking to capture the magic. And Brian Jones recorded the Gnoua in Marrakesh with Rolling Stones producer Glyn Johns before going to Joujouka to record the music that would be released on the notorious *Pipes Of Pan* album.

Frank Rynne had previously spent a week in Marrakesh in November 1994. Now he wanted to record the Gnoua in order to juxtapose their music with religious music from Joujouka on the *Sub Rosa* CD *Sufi*. "Among Sufi musicians there is great respect for different disciplines that are powerful," explains Rynne. "The Joujouka musicians know Gnoua music, they even do a Gnoua song up there."

According to Mohammed Hann's book *Tales Of Joujouka*, when the Sufi scholar Sidi Ahmed Sheich first heard the inhabitants of Joujouka playing, "he understood a way of healing with music. The energy could be taken in, converted and sent directly to the brain. Such a powerful contact, with a sound and pitch so high, could be used with the blessing of Allah like a

tour bus, forging a fragile path between animals, children, healers and hustlers. The Djemma is also where the Gnoua musicians which Rynne has come to record ply their trade: the click-clack of their silver castanets resonates above the clamour of car horns, scooters, the shouts of street peddlars and the loudhailer call of the muezzin.

By day, the Gnoua remind me of The Rock Steady Crew in their heyday: a bunch of teenagers dressed in jeans, trainers and bootleg designer labels. But to perform their holy music, they don the traditional garb of the Brotherhood: vibrantly coloured silken robes stitched with ornate Sufi patterns and the Hand of Fatima, woolen caps with shells stitched into them and long tasseled strands on top that whirl in a blurred blade above their heads when they dance.

All but one of the Gnoua tracks on *Sufi* were recorded in the heart of the medina, in a long, thin, blue room at the house of Hassan 'L'Gadir' Zoucan. Among the musicians present is Moustapha Hakoun, whose brother Hassan has recorded strange, intoxicating fusions of Gnoua music with free jazz and Heavy Metal in New York under the name Zahar. Frank Rynne records the music using a Pro Walkman, crouching between the Gnoua, turning the microphone, drawing it back and forth, adjusting levels.

The music starts with the soft, powerful vibrations of the ghimbri, and builds a captivating rhythm with steel castanets, clapping and vocals. The Gnoua sing about Sufi saints, of which there are many in Marrakesh. Rynne describes it as "an addictive experience, getting completely trapped in their music. There's an intense musical and spiritual high that they hit. Not necessarily at the same time, but there are times during their ceremonies when they do mix the two together."

That night, the Djemma feels like a psychedelic circus straight out of a Jodorowsky movie. We wander out into the square to find the spot where the Gnoua have set up and hunker down with them at the end of the line they form, with the ghimbri player plucking the bass rhythm, always in the centre. In these performances, the energy generated by the Gnoua is almost indescribable but captured beautifully on recordings. Frank Rynne made on his first trip to Marrakesh.

An arc of onlookers made up of tourists and the after-dark population of the square form around the Gnoua. An amputee dwarf leans against a parked scooter. A slice-shine led stands looking forlorn sniffing boot-polish from a dirty rag he holds over his face. The music breaks him out of his chemical reverie and he jerks his body to the rhythms. A bestial-looking man staggers drunkenly into the circle, puts a shot glass in his mouth, bites off chunks and spits them out as blood streams over his lip, illuminated white smoke from the food stalls above us like approaching storm clouds. This circle of music and dancing feels like a haven in the centre of the maelstrom. **CHRIS CAMPION** *Sufi* is out now on *Sub Rosa* (through SBD).

PHOTO BY PHARAH BY BRIAN GROH COURTESY OF ELEKTRA/NONAGON



the Gnoua Brotherhood of Marrakesh

Marrakesh was once a capital for the whole Sahara region and is a melting pot of (mainly French) European colonials, indigenous Arab and Berber desert peoples.

It is said that the Gnoua are descended from an elite group of slaves, brought from the Sub-Saharan region, who served as a mercenary army for the Sultan of Marrakesh. Their religion, Sufism, is an esoteric doctrine that contains within it the original tenets of Islam but at times is at odds with the orthodox religion. For the Gnoua, music and dancing are forms of worship.

In the 40s, Paul Bowles recorded the Gnoua for the American Library of Congress, while more recently,

surgical tool to heal minds."

"The thing about the music is that it is trance music and has a purpose," continues Rynne. "It has an effect on the brain in some way. [But] both Gnoua and Joujouka are trance music [because] they are religious music. It's not just for a drug experience."

The Place Djemma El Fna is a dusty market square, bordered by cafés, hotels and the Souk (covered market) — a far cry from the wide roads, modern hotels and apartment blocks that make up the centre of Marrakesh.

Tourists with cameras huddle in a line behind tour guides carrying large yellow stop signs. They trail around the Djemma before being herded back onto the

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TELEGRAPH



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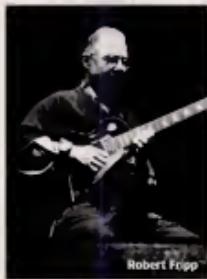
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# soundings

## march

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts



Robert Fripp

### Festivals/Seasons

**Now You See It** A window on some of the possible musics of the 21st century, this weekend of events offers the first UK demonstration of 'hypemusic' — instruments augmented with computer and synthesizer technology that feature easy-to-control interfaces, developed at the MIT Media Lab in Boston. The devices and the sounds they make will be demonstrated by composer Tod Machover, who also previews his forthcoming interactive epic, *Brian Opera* (Hypervent, 7 March, 7.45pm, see Multimedia page 73), and publicly debates the future of computer music in a Hypersymposium (9, 2pm). Also in the series, Robert Fripp performs his guitar Soundscapes in the Queen Elizabeth Hall foyer (7-10, times vary, free); choreographers Lea Anderson, Wendy Houston and Wayne McGregor colonise the QEH auditorium, watched by an audience sitting on the stage, in *The Reverse Effect* (9, 7.45pm, 10, 9.30pm), and *Opera Comique* premieres their production of *Winkenreise* at Hammersmith Lyric Theatre (13-16, 7.30pm). As an adjunct to the season,

Robert Sandall hosts a debate on *The Future Of Music*, with David Toop, Brian Eno, Howe B, Peter Gabriel and Robin Rimbaud/Scanner (Puncill Room, 9, 4.30pm). Ticket details from SBC Box Office: 0171 960 4242.

#### Areas And Volumes: Bruce

Gilbert O'U Beekeeper launches his new solo album *Ab Ovo* with a weather-related installation at London's Purr Gallery (62 Bell Street, NW1, 14 March, 7.30pm). Further displays will be taking place over the following months at unlikely venues around the capital: more details as we get 'em.

**Urban Aboriginals** 11th annual Berlin festival of experimental music (23-31 March) focuses on the UK avant garde and Ambient scene. Taking part in performances and installations at the city's Podewil and Bellhaus. Mainly UK venues are Max Eastley, Robert Hampson and Eddie Prévost plus Stock, Hauser & Winkler (23), Philip Jeck, Slanted Jones and Bell Helicopter (24), zowefrance and AMFM (26), Scanner and Swoof (29), Kaffe Matthews's Magic Violin Music, plus Del Trp Computer Del (31), and additionally Robin Rimbaud will be hosting his Electronic Lounge (fretted Circuit) throughout the festival at Freer club. Brian Eno will also be lecturing in the Parochialkirche. For all information, phone 00 49 30 615 2702, or fax 00 49 30 614 8695. There's also info on the web at <http://www.ikz.de/urban>

#### Rough Trade 20th Anniversary

The Cocteau Twins, Raincoats, Cornershop, Spring Heel Jack, Bruce Gilbert, U2, David Holmes and Tindersticks all join hands to celebrate a double decade of everyone's favourite radical retail outlet (25-31 March). Full running order still to be confirmed. London Subterana, itbc, all details on 0171 240 0105.

**Believing Is Believing** Robin Rimbaud, Bruce Gottheb, Negativland's Don Joyce/Crooley Bends, sound archivist Katherine Norman and others contribute to this two-day symposium exploring experimental radio. Sunderland University, 2-3 March, tickets and further info on 0191 281 6334.

**New Auras 3** The final bio avant sound-clashes in this LMC-sponsored

season of 'sounds after music' feature Stock, Hauser & Winkler with Xper.Xr, plus New York's OJ Spooky and Ben Nell (1 March), and Man with Eddie Prévost and Max Eastley, plus Quebec turntablist Martin Tetreault and guest appearance from Negativland's Crooley Bends (8). London Conway Hall, £7/£5, tickets and information from 0171 490 2119.

### On Stage

**Bandulu** Much-missed Techno warriers provide support on three dates with Underworld, Glasgow Barrowlands (15 March), Manchester Academy (23), London Brixton Academy (30).

**Earththrill + Talvin Singh + Rootsman** Pushing the envelope in Indo-dub fusion. Leeds Cockpit, 14 March, 9.30pm, £6/£5, 0113 244 3446.

**Max Eastley + John Russell + Paul Shearsmith** Former SME improvisors provide backing for Eastley's hyperkinetic sound sculptures. Luton 33 Arts Centre (20 March), Sheffield The Grapes (28), Oldbury St. Aclan's Hall (29).

**Robert Fripp + Europa String Choir** Solo string of the King Crimson guitarist's Proppertronic Soundscapes. London Union Chapel, 20 March, 0171 226 1686.

**Master Musicians Of Jousouka** 4000 year old rock 'n' roll! two appearances by the Moroccan troupe led by Hamin (ie not the alternative Bachir Attar version). London Rhythmic, 9-10 March, £10/£8, 0171 713 5859.

**Megadog** Final UK date of the grand tour, featuring System 7, Spring Heel Jack, Alex Reece, Andrew Weatherall/Sabres Of Paradise, Ken Ishii, and many more. London Brixton Academy, 2 March, £19/£17, 0171 924 9999.

**Mystere** Centuries-old celestial voices from Bulgaria. London RPH (9 March); Edinburgh Festival Theatre (11), Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral (12), Salisbury Cathedral (14), Birmingham Symphony Hall (15), Cambridge Corn Exchange (16), Croydon Fairfield Hall (17).

**Red Snapper** Catch the Warp cult's sleazy HipHop as they tour with Ruby Brighton, Concorde (11 March), Bristol New Tram (17), London UU (8), Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (9), Sheffield Leadmill (12), Manchester MOH (13), Glasgow Arches (14).

**Steve Reich** The USO perform *Clapping Music*, *Eight Lines*, *Sextet* and *Tehillim* at the original minimalist's 60th birthday concert. London Barbican, 6 March, 7.30pm, £30-£6, 0171 638 8891.

**Ronald Shannon Jackson** muscular master of harmonic drums. London Rhythmic, 14-16 March, £12-£6, 0171 713 5859.

**SoundArt 96** New electroacoustic compositions and improvisations performed by John Butcher, Alex Balanescu, Steve Beresford, Francine Luce, Owe Bell and others. London Conway Hall, 9/16/23 March, 7.30 pm, £6/£4, 0171 242 8032.

**Stereolab + Tortoise** Blanket British Isles coverage for two vanguard space rock outifts. Gloucester Guildhall (2 March).

Bristol New Trinity (3); Cardiff University (4); Belfast Mandela Hall (6); Cork/Nancy Spain's (7); Dublin Olympia (8); Glasgow Garage (10); Nottingham Clinton Room (11); Manchester MOH (12); Bradford University (13); London Forum (14).

**Towards The Millennium** London Sinfonietta's tribute to Gil Evans and

## Club Spaces

**Disco** It's back! - sort of. Starting this month a regular *Kino Disco* slot to screen unsung/forgotten film archives. This month: a rough cut of a Can live performance from 1972; London Horse Hotel Coloniale, WC1, 21 March, 8-11pm, £4, 0181 960 9529 (info only).

**Electronics Lounge** Music from the Mini Sound System comes above the hubbub, London ICA, 5 March, 8pm-1am, £20/£15, 0171 498 3032.

**Firmament** Dark Ambient and noisy Electronica hits the South Coast: regular DJs play Man, Coil, Scanner, Germ, µ-Ziq, Zorn, Oval, etc. Brighton Basement Club, 6 and 20 March, 8pm-midnight, free info at <http://www.cogs.susx.ac.uk/users/jonathan/>

**Hypnotique** Warp-factor Easy Listening and Exotica, from Les Baxter to Jake Slazenger, with special set from Edward Texture (aka Hoss 'Wishmountain' Herbert) London Albany, 9 March, 8pm-1am, £5/£4, 0171 281 8106.

**Idiowires** Electronic experimental insanity hosted by the Ambient Scho people. With Jamie Hodge (Born Under A Rhyming Planet), Plug Research, Richard James, Squearpusher, Strictly Kev, Rob Hall (Gescom) and Zero Gravity Sound System. London Rocket,

Miles Davis, Guy Barker joins to perform special arrangements of Miles Ahead and Sketches Of Spain. Plus works by Cage, Nancarrow and Zimmermann. London QEII, 4 March, 7.45pm, 0171 960 4242, Birmingham Symphony Hall, 5, 7.30pm, 0121 212 3333

15 March, 9pm-6am, £8 50/£6.50, 0171 437 0521

**PM Scientists** Weekly Wednesday night slot for progressive abstract beat happenings. Guest DJs include Andy C (6 March), Atica Blues/O'Afro (13), Jed Knights (27) London Jazz Bistro, EC1, Wednesday, 9pm-2am, £3, info 0181 780 9766

**Rampus Room** MK Ultra, Goldfinger and Xavier squeeze styles through the blender, plus different special guest DJ each week. London Albany, W1, Sundays, 7pm-midnight, £3, 0171 388 0558

**The Sprawl** DJs Paul Thomas (Kiss FM) and Calvin Bush (Mulg magazine), plus live vocal samples from 8Tonic, London Cafe Internet, 22-24 Buckingham Palace Road, SW1, 28 March, 7-11pm, £3/£2.50 + 50p m'ship includes half-hour free Internet use, info 0181 883 0972

**Stealth** Four-deck Ninja party Coldcut, OJ Food, The Herbaliser, Funk Porcupine, etc at the controls. London Blue Note, 28 March, 9.30pm-3am, £5, 0171 729 8440

**The Wireless** Freestyle mixing business jazz, lo-fi and out rock, to drum 'n' bass and progressive Electronica. London Upstars at the Garage, 1 and 29 March, 8pm-3am, £4/£3, 0171 607 1818

Soundings items should reach us by **Friday 8 March** for inclusion in the April issue

## Radio

### National

**BBC Radio 1**

**One In The Jungle** Thursdays 9-10pm Guest DJs provide hour-long breakbeat mix

**John Peel Project** Alben-Jams, Saturdays 5-7pm Still the best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electronica, dub and the legendary sessions

**Atomic Nightclub** Saturdays 2-4am Chilled-out electronic sounds for the after-club set

**Andy Kershaw** Sundays 11pm-12am World Music from all quarters, folk, roots, reggae and more

**BBC Radio 3**

**Music In Pictures** 10.45-11.30pm Mark Russell and Robert Sandall's selection of avant garde rock, jazz and contemporary classical music. Includes highlights from L'Uc, New Aurora Concerts, Mandelieu, Proléto, Forma Tenkut (4 March), Sacks, Hoxon & Walkowitz/D' Spoo/Gen Nell (18)

**Hour And Now** Friday eve, times vary Contemporary music magazine including interviews, new recordings and live performances. With Birmingham Contemporary Music Group recorded in concert (8 and 22 March)

**Impressions** Alternate Sundays 10.30am-1pm Brian Morton examines the state of modern jazz in interviews and on record. In session this month: Supernova (3 March)

Alternates with **Jazz In Concert** Live modern jazz recorded in UK, broadcast fortnightly

### Regional

**BBC Radio 2**

**Soundcheck** Sundays 3-5pm Ashley Franklin plays instrumental Electronica, contemporary classical/contemporary music, New Age and Ambient

**BBC Greater London Radio (GLR)**

**Charlie Gillett** Saturdays 7-9pm Rock, roots, dub, World Music, blues, R&B and more

**BBC Lancashire**

**On The Wire** Saturdays 12-2am Anything goes in Steve Barker's seasoned New Music, mer dub, experimental electronica, out rock, free improv and more

**BBC Merseyside**

**The Late World House** Fridays 10.30-2.30am Out rock, psychedelia, Jungle, avant-dance, warped Ambient and global grooves in themed sequences

**GRIME (Milton Keynes)**

**The Garden Of Earthly Delights** Fridays 10am-1pm Shane Quinton's blend of avant rock to electronic excess with bizarre soundscapes

**Galaxy Radio (Bristol)**

**Paul Carty** Thursdays 10-11pm Numbered vibes from Ron Sza and Knut

**Kiss 100 FM (London)**

**Brett Gruen Whitey** 9-10pm Latest drum 'n' bass spin by Randall, Kenny Kain, LT Baker, DJ Hype

**The Chill Out Zone** Thursdays 1-8am, Sundays 6-7pm Paul Thomas plays the best in experimental Ambient, dub and Electronica, plus guest mix by Tony Thompson. Language Records (28 March)

**Intelligent Drums W Bass** Fridays 10-11pm Fabio and Grooverider mix the jars

**Goldcat** Saturdays 8-9pm Mu-Deck mayhem from the Ninja crew

**Giles Peterson** Sundays 8-11pm Weekly selection of new Hip-Hop, Trance, Electronica and eclectic intergalactic studio interviews, special guests

**Kiss 100 FM (Manchester)**

**Be Intoxicated** W Bass Show Mondays 8-10pm Northern Jungle selection

**808 State** Fridays 8-10pm Something for the weekend from the veteran crew

**Alpha Waves** Saturdays 4-6am Electronica, exotica and hipnotron with Stuart James, plus guest mix

from Thomas Fehrmann/Sun Electric (2 March)

**Shengeng** Sundays 4-4pm Electronica and beyond with Autodriven's Sean Booth and Rob Brown

**ETM (South London)**

**Sharp As A Knife** Sundays 5-7pm John Kennedy spins out rock, dub, Electronica, experimental Ambient, Hip-Hop, plus live studio jams

AREAS & VOLUMES No. 1

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# bites

## T Power

What does a police state sound like? The serpent's kiss of a pepper spray and the incessant buzz of a circling helicopter's rotorblades? Or, much more subtle, the anodyne drone of rapid Techno from a man-who-fells-to-earth pop star generated by an autistic music industry? One possible answer has been pre-empted by the new recording by T Power, "Police State". Like last year's album *The Self Evident Truth Of An Insane Mind*, it is a conceptual project: a conspiracy theory given a digitized soundscape of drums 'n' bass (the sound of the paranoid megapolis). The intention this time, says T Power (real name Mark Royal), was to create "a fusion of music with ideologies".

"It's not about trying to musically interpret anything," Royal explains. "It's a prototype of where the music's going to go. It's more about, here's the music, if you are into that type of thing, listen to it, but there's also threads of information running through it as well."

"Prospects For Democracy", one of the tracks on the single (which is to be released both as a 39 minute mix CD and on two pieces of red and blue vinyl), takes its cue from Noam Chomsky. Royal seems pleased at the mention of the linguist's name. "I'm quite into Chomsky

at the moment. What he's saying is very relevant and I think people want to pay more attention to people like him, and to what's going on TV, because it's actually these ideologies that they are going to use as the excuse to throw us into a global police state. Because, frankly, they know it's the only way out."

I scan the books stacked on the table in Royal's bedroom studio, among them are Stanley Grof's *The Holotropic Mind* and the conspiracy buff's favorite, William Cooper's *Behold A Pale Horse*. He then launches into a lengthy but reasoned explanation (peppered with facts and figures) of the foundations of the control systems being readied to contain end-of-millennium fever.

For the conspiracy theorist, paranoia fills the modern spiritual void with a fervent desire to understand. Forget God, pray to the Grays. But it's also an antidote to the contemporary condition that requires us to do nothing more than switch on, turn on and zone out.

Sounding suitably conspiratorial, Royal claims that it was this unwillingness to look beyond the surface that led many to ignore the thematic subtext running through the *Self Evident Truth* album.

"I'm not expecting everyone to hear it, but if you break it down to basic principles the concept's in there. You can break the brain down into bi-hemispherical functions. One side handles emotion, the other side handles intellect. Intellect can be broken down into shapes, which is geometry. The emotional side can be broken down into colours. A confusion of those senses brings about synaesthesia. This is basically when you can hear shapes or if you hear a sound you might be able to see colours to it."

"For the album we induced a sense of synaesthesia by basically smoking a hell of a lot of pot. We did see certain shapes within the music and I was drawing certain shapes out for the sounds of the tracks to filter through. As for the colours, if you hear water you will immediately associate it with blue."

Behind the drum 'n' bass rhythms, simple melodies and freeform electronic structures of his music, there lies an obsessive attention to detail. With the addition of a Prophecy synth, Royal says he is moving deeper into the fusion of drum 'n' bass with Techno. "I'm not much of a synth boffin, really I just like something to do what I want it to do."

This lesser-fane attitude to technology is symptomatic of musicians who, for a long time had to make the best of the limited resources available to them. Royal's background is in Hip-Hop and sound systems. Between 1982 and 91 he worked with various MCs and shopped around for a deal but found there was little interest in anything other than the American sound.

"I got fed up with the rejection. From there I started messing about with contemporary sounds. I started listening to people like Sakamoto, but then just completely lost the plot in the early 90s when I started raving. I was bombing too many pills away and it was like, I want to hear piano pianos and principally voices." **CHRIS CAMPION** "Police State" is released this month on Sound Of The Underground (through Vital).

## Ui

From Pt. to Laika, Blonde to Luscious Jackson, many of rock's most subversive moments have resulted from the paradoxical combination of a deep sense of engagement with a specific scene and restless channel surfing on urban radio. Although the end results are anything but typical, the skeletal ruminations on groove, space and intuition of New York trio *Ui* are the latest instalment in this series of dispatches from the metropole.

As he talks about his influences, bassist Sasha Frere-Jones waxes rhapsodic about the innovation of New York radio in the early 80s. "I don't know, maybe I was just young," he says. "Maybe if I was young now, I would think everything is being thrown together. But I get the feeling that it's not. You remember those early Hip-Hop shows. It was amazing what they played because there was no Hip-Hop yet. They were making it up as they went along. They would play the records they liked. There was some rapping, but Hip-Hop shows didn't have that much rapping because there weren't very many rap records to play. They played Parliament, they played the entire Trans-Europe Express. I thought, 'Oh, this is great.' It seemed to be about everyone getting down together. Now the records are pretty predictable. Hip-Hop's a genre. Genre is bad."

Typical of someone who hates generic convention, Frere-Jones is equally enamoured of Roscoe Mitchell and Headzheads, Neal and Autchre, The Sits and Black Flag. "When I was young there were no guitar bands," he says. "The ones that were around were like Bad Brains. The first time I heard 'Pay To Cum' it was like the hardest hardcore ever. I couldn't believe it when I found out they were black. Again, everything — reggae and hardcore — was being thrown together. I know it's sad, but I just want to recreate my high school experience."

Unlike Talking Heads, whose syncretic pop often sounded like the catalogue of downtown New York City sophistication, *Ui*'s polymorphously perverse references are stripped down until the only remnant is pure sound. *Ui*'s route to musical abstraction is based on the same principle as that of breakbeat culture: taking a small, perfect moment of music and extending its pleasure infinitely. "When the guitar licks in on 'Street Fighting Man', you want it to last forever. That's the idea. So much of the Trip-Hop stuff around at the moment, though, is so bloodless. There's no air in it," says Frere-Jones.

With a line-up that features two bass players and a drummer — with banjo, tapes and occasional guitar thrown in for good measure — *Ui* are all about space space as nuance, space as atmosphere, space as phat, expansive groove. The group's main compositional tool is chance. Frere-Jones says that, his drummer Clem Waldfrieden and bassist Wilbo Wright work on song ideas for a year or two until a fortuitous accident turns the music in the right direction. "Instead of making sure the aesthetics are in place, we come from the other way."





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around," says Frere-Jones. "If you come in with an idea, you've forced yourself to stick to that idea, then you're not really doing anything new. I want to know exactly why I'm doing what I'm doing, but I never want to know exactly where it comes from. I never know what combination of elements is going to make it happen. If we rehearse too much, then it's bad. If we don't rehearse at all, then we get grouchy."

Although Frere-Jones says, "I'm still obsessed with the idea of a band playing well together", it's the internalization of studio-based dance music that sets *Ui* apart. With the Junglest churning on "Sharpe" (from the forthcoming "Sparkle" EP) and the Plasticman-derived dynamics of "Drive Towards The Smoke" from their new (and debut) album, *Selelong* (the group has previously released a 1993 EP, "2-Sided", and a mini-album of remixes, *Unite!*), *Ui* avoid creating "essays about rhythm in rhythm" by making their analysis of sound swing as hard as Goldie or Method Man. As Frere-Jones says of the mind-body divide, "I know the analogy isn't great, but if you get too much up your own ass, you're in trouble. If you get too much inside your own head, you're in trouble."

Unfortunately, because of their use of 'real' instruments and experimental tempos and textures, *Ui* have been lumped in with the 'post-rock' brigade. "Post-rock isn't re-creating rock," says Frere-Jones. "For the most part, it's splintering off college kids. They're very upfront about the fact that they're almost academic. It's great that kids are getting into more abstract music. If a kid goes into a record shop and buys a Faust album along with a Sonic Youth record, that's great because no one's telling him what the rules are. It's not great if it becomes Ley League rock, private rock. It's great if it becomes the revenge of the smart guy. 'We're not going to dance your dance anymore. We're going to dance this way'." **PETER SHAPIRO** The "Sparkle" EP and *Selelong* are released this month on Soul Static Sound and Southern respectively (both through SRS). *Ui* are due to perform in London later this month; see *Soundings* for details.

FAN FARE PROUDLY PRESENTS

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# Reflective

Jonah Sharp is typical of a new breed of mobile musician, moving effortlessly across both stylistic and geographical boundaries. An English emigre living in San Francisco who records serene Electronica under the name Space Time Continuum, Sharp also runs the Reflective label. Originally founded in late 1993 as an outlet for his first single, "Fluorescence", a record which has proved to be a landmark in contemporary Ambient music, the "hologram label", as it has come to be known for its trademark holographic decals, has been responsible for a series of inventive, eclectic releases drawn from various nodes on the emerging global electronic network. Reflective artists include young Bay Area talent such as Velocity (the excellent *Cloudwings* EP) and McSheen, as well as more established names including MLO and Kid Spatula, an alias for Mike (μ-Ziq) Paradaus. There have also been collaborations and joint releases with Germany's Fax and Source Records.

"A release has to bring something new to the label", says Sharp. "The artist must be driven to create something new." Recent album releases highlight the label's diversity: *Dead Vent 2*, a sci-fi drama soundtrack by LiA's Single Cell Orchestra, *Homebrew* by Subtopic, the first drum 'n' bass artist album to emerge from America, and Jonah's own *Empti Eggs*, a record which distils most of the salient elements of end-of-the-millennium Electronica and propels them forward into the 21st century.

Sharp first came to prominence circa 1990 when he was still living in London. With clothing designer Richard Sharpe, he co-hosted a short-lived but influential series of Ambient parties using the name Spacetime. Since moving to America he has established a reputation for his freewheeling live performances. Meanwhile, his recorded music has phase-shifted from the emotional simplicity of "Fluorescence" to the multi-layered complexities of *Empti Eggs* — a development due in no small part to the large number of collaborative ventures he has undertaken since that first Reflective release. These include Pete Namlook, Bill Laswell, Japan's Tetsu Inoue, and Plaid, on the recent "South Of Market" EP. "Since I started making electronic music, I've always

been looking for a permanent partner," he explains. "The collaborations go some way to making up for that."

There's a sense of evolution about Reflective that's almost organic. Apart from Sharp himself, Subtopic is perhaps the best example of this. The work of another Englishman abroad, Jake Smith, the drum 'n' bass mechanisms of Homebrew seem a long way from the linear dancefloor Techno of his debut "Thrill" EP, yet it retains Smith's recognisable signature.

As the head of Reflective, Sharp sees himself as one part of a collective effort, albeit one with great influence: perhaps the label is his point of entry to those regions he cannot access personally. As he says: "In 1995, I expended more energy on other people's music than on my own, but they're two sides of the same coin."

"It's my label, so I feel as I decide what we're going to release," he continues, "but Billie [Jonah's wife] has got an awful lot to do with it, handling all the administration, and the artists always get involved with the practicalities of their releases: we make them hologram their own records!" **PETER MCINTYRE** Reflective releases are distributed in the UK by Demix/DSIC



they're all working bands that are evolving. I think that's the long-term impact the music has."

As a player, Douglas mixes a varied timbral palette full of expressive half-valve effects with Eastern European tones and scales. He cites Miles, Woody Shaw and Herb Robertson as influences, "not only the way they play the horn, but the way they play shapes, the use of the horn in the music, that they played and the bands that they organized and the way that they put together the drama and the situation."

Even more than his playing, his writing explains his distinctiveness. "I try to get away from the habits and clichés and patterns and traps of jazz, improvised music. Part of the reason for starting a string group was to have this group that there was no real precedent for."

One of the more unusual elements in his style comes from the ethnic European music he has played and studied — klezmer, Romanian folk music, and music from Serbia and Macedonia, "which is really sophisticated for the brass instruments. Some of the most virtuosic brass playing is in the tradition where most of the tunes are in 11/8 or 15/8. My first effort with Tiny Bell Trio was an outgrowth of my studies in all that music."

Like every musician you'll ever meet, Douglas doesn't want to make too much of specific styles or categories, and in his case the sheer breadth of his listening keeps anything from dominating. The string group's two albums in particular display his range with covers of Stravinsky, Webern, Kurt Weill and Rahsaan Roland Kirk.

Two future projects may the scope of Douglas's ambition: he is mid-way through composing a triple concerto for trumpet, cello, drums and orchestra. Then there is *Sonctuary*, for a group consisting of two trumpets, two samplers, two double basses and two drummers ("It's in the spirit of [Coltrane's] *Ascension* and [Ornette Coleman's] *Free Jazz*," explains Douglas. "It's like a long-form, mostly free improvised piece, kind of a double quartet, sort of"). **STEVE HOLZER** Recent Dave Douglas releases include *Tiny Bell Trio's Constellations* (not HUT), *In Our Lifetime* (New World), *Pantheon* (Soul Note), and *New And Used's Consensus* (Knitting Factory Works). (The first three are available through Harmonia Mundi; *Consensus* is distributed by Carga)

PHOTO: ANDREW WALKER



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80

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Afrika Bambaataa and Soul Sonic Force



George Clinton



Michael Jonzun

GEORG  
AN



In its original incarnation, **Electro** was black science fiction teleported to the dancefloors of New York, Miami and LA; a super-stooid fusion of video games, techno-pop, graffiti art, silver space suits and cyborg funk. Now that Electro is back, David Toop provides a thumbnail guide to the music that posed the eternal question: Wotupski, bug byte?

**A** "Al-Naaflysh (The Soul)" stands as prime contender for the weird-titles-in-a-pop-award. Released on **Alido** and **Amado** Marin's Cutting Records label, Hashem's glacial, squelching track became a breaker's anthem in the UK. Also "Arkade Funk" by Tilt Trouble Funk's Washington DC hybrid of arcade games, Electronics, live go-go percussion, and Voodooded, pitchshifted lyrics. "I am an onbase junk machine - search and destroy."

**B** Urban spaceman **Afrika Bambaataa** and producer **Arthur Baker**, plus musician John Robie, were the trio behind a music revolution called "Planet Rock", Bambaataa's 1982 single with Soul Sonic Force. Following the impact of "Planet Rock", UK groups made Electro-boogie pilgrimages to Baker's studio at Manhattan Freeze's "10U" rocked jazz funk into the atmosphere but more significantly, New Order's "Blue Monday" launched indie dancing and sold massively on 12". Also **breaking** and robot dancing, the acrobatic and simulated machine dances that drew many adolescents into the alien zone of **black science fiction**.

**Bleep music** was one consequence of this. Hardly adequate to describe and encompass the protozoic chaos of New York Nu Groove, Detroit Techno, Chicago House, Sheffield post-industrial (Sweet Exorcist and Xon), Leeds Techin (LP) and Bradford HipHop (Unique Three) propagated by Network Records in Birmingham and Warp in Sheffield, bleep's Electro connectors were indisputable. Next came Techno.

**C** **Cybotron**, the Detroit branchid of Juan Atkins and Rick Davis, alias 3070, creators of "Clear", "Techno City" and "Cosmic Cars". **Cold Crush Brothers** were old-school South Bronx pioneers but they joined the beat wave with "Punk Rock Rap" and "Presto Wild, Fly and Bold". **Captain Rock**, **Captain Rapp** and **Captain Sky** did their space cadet thang, but nobody could go further out into the plunkosphere than **George Clinton**. Role-model for young American blaxics who wanted to dress up in tinfoil and join Outer Spaceways incorporated. George proved there was life in the old iron dog by releasing the analogous squelching **Computer Games** in 1992.

**D**avy DMX. Queens DJ, multi-instrumentalist and creator of "The DMX Will Rock", named himself after the Oberheim DMX, drum machine of choice in mid-80s HipHop.

**E**lectro-pop. British style. Depeche Mode, Ultravox, Human League, Gary Numan, Thomas Dolby et al. The one-finger keyboard techniques of Depeche Mode were an inspiration to a generation of scratch DJs across the Atlantic. **808** (as in Roland), the beatbox whose artfully liberated Electrods from drum clichés.

**F**utura, Fab Five Freddy, Face 2000 and Phase II, all graffiti artists who recorded Electro-rap tracks on Cellophane. Manhattan's temple of futurist Electro. **Freestyle**, late 80s New York dance music, very post-Electro-pre-Garage, Latin flavoured, frequently soft-core ("Talk Dirty To Me", "Vanessa Del Rio") as recorded by Corporation Of One, Bad Boy Orchestra and Tommy Musto.

**G** After **Grandmaster Flash** and "Scorpio" came **Grandmaster Melle Mel** with Electro hits — "White Lines" and "Survival" — followed by **Grandmixer D-STA**'s "Grand Mixx Cuts It Up", a storm of stereo-panned arcade bleeps. D STA went on to perform live on turntables with Herbie Hancock's Rockit band. Forming the **golden triangle** of Electro in the late 80s were Miami Bass, New York Latin freestyle and in LA — pre-gangsta — Dr Dre and DJ Yella cutting production teeth on "Planet Rock" clones such as World Class Wrecking Cru and the fast, juvenile sub-bass of JJ Fad's "Supersonic".

**H** With 70s albums such as Sextant, Thrust and Headhunters, **Herbie Hancock** anticipated many tropes and tricks of Electro. His Electro tracks with Bill Laswell — particularly the smash hit "Rockit" — were not such a future shock, and his earlier music has aged better. In **Hollywood**, the cinematic possibilities of robot beats and moves in the dooredoor megalopolis were ill-served by such films as *Botto Street, Breakin'* and *Flashdance*. As (almost) always, the best ideas were the cheapest, a principle suggested by one scene in *Breakin'* (Breakdancing I in the UK) a dance routine with a broom and Kraftwerk's "Tour De France". Post-Electro, the **human beat box**, exemplified by Dougé Fresh and The Fat Boys, was a biological response to the drum machine.



Herbie Hancock

**I** For glorious one-offs it's hard to beat "We Come To Rock" by the **Imperial Brothers**, "Running" by **Information Society** (a Latin freestyle prototype followed up by relentlessly dull quasi-'British' Electro-pop albums) or "Inspector Gadget" by The Kartoone Krew.

**J** Boston's **Jonzun Crew**, led by Michael Jonzun, were literally the most wiggled-out Electro act of all, being their stage appearance on Beethoven



Kraftwerk

For mutant cybernetic phunk, their *Last In Space* album, particularly the menacing "Pack Jam", remains chilly the most. Regrettably, Jonzun and his brother, Maurice Starr, went on to produce lukewarm mainstream R&B Jonzun Crew, along with virtually everybody who was anybody, were mixed or remixed by **Jellybean** DJ at The Funhouse. John 'Jellybean' Benitez met Madonna in the DJ booth one night, stepped out with her for two years and mixed her records, thus drawing a strong link between Electro and the biggest female star in music.

**K**raftwerk, the showroom dummies who caused Bambambo to scratch his head and say "Scuse the expression, this is some weird shit." For "Planet Rock", Barn used the melody from "Trans Europe Express". Over the distinctive BOB beat, the effect was spectral. The idea of making music from pocket calculators appealed to kids accustomed to scratching vinyl. Meanwhile, in the UK, **Morgan Khan** made a developing genre of music financially accessible to an entire generation with his Streetsounds Electro series of compilation albums.

**L** Since young Hispanics — male and female — formed the US core audience of instrumental Electro, the cyber-salsa teen romance of **Latin HipHop** was an inevitable evolution. Notable for thunderous club mixes, slushy chords and sentiments, melodrama and bad clothes, this mid-80s phenomenon was represented in New York by Shannon, Amorette, Cover Girls, TKA et al, in Miami, Expose were brand leaders. Central to the scene due to their Electro edits, Latin HipHop production and remixing were the **Latin Rascals** — Albert Cabrera and Tony Moran — who made the endearingly trashy *Boch To The Future* album (titles include "A Little Night Noise" and "Yo, Else")

**M**iami Bass took up Electro after NYC had finished with it, turned up the sub-bass on the kick drum, filled cars and jeeps with woofers and tweeters, and drove around the hot streets of their Fourth World, postmodern city in a nomadic ecstasy of boom. Tracks by Boose and Gucci II fetishised loudspeaker power, perpetual movement, RoboCop and similar urban dislocations. DJ Extraordinaire And The Bassadelic Boom Patrol's "Drop The Bass (Lower The Boom)" went over the edge with its info-bites. The Beat Club's "Security" merged Planet Patrol and Human League into a heaving epic of sci-fi emotions. **Maggatrex**, who combined awesome bass drum boom with rampant George Clinton influences, manic scratch 'n' sniff production, screaming Metal guitar solos and a relentless dedication to Electro clichés. Their *Bass Planet Paradox* (1990) boasts titles such as "Pygmies in Deviles", "Temple Of Boom" (the original) and a cover of Clinton's "Plagget Brain" that the late, great Eddie Hazel would have been proud of. **Mantronix** (Man + Electronix) came just after Electro. The musical combination of raps, vocoded choruses, sequenced basslines, clap delays and crashing beatbox snare suggests they were influential on 90s drum 'n' bass. Also here: **Man Parrish** for the all-time Electro classic "Hip Hop Be Bop (Don't Stop)"



Mantronix

**N** Gary Numan, the eyelinered squadron leader of British techno-pop, whose "Cars" struck an unlikely chord in the hearts of Electro-Hop-Boppers. Buried in the archives but never to be forgotten **Nitro Deluxe**, who briefly fused Electro, experimental House and Techno, apparently without knowing it. **Newtrament**, whose "London Bridge Is Falling Down" was the first (and one of the few) creditable UK Electro records. **Newkies**, whose "Jam On It" can still bring nostalgic tears to the eyes of the chillest Brit-based technocrat or hardass rapper.

**O** Bobby O, New York (mostly hi-energy) producer who released the awesome, surreal Beat Box Boys Electro-minimalist 12" "Give Me My Money", "Entz" and "Yum Yum — Eat Em Up". Bobby Orlando also signed and produced The Pet Shop Boys in the same year.

**P** "Planet Rock" for the party people convening on forkly **Pluto**, and **Planet Patrol**, a Boston vocal quartet shamelessly transformed into an extra-terrestrial mutation of The Styxlosis by Arthur Baker and John Robie in order to sing Electro versions of Gary Glitter's "I Didn't Know I Loved You (Till I Saw You Rock And Roll)" and Todd Rundgren's "It Wouldn't Have Made Any Difference". Their "Play At Your Own Risk" was one of the great Electro singles. RIP **Pumpkin**, "King Of The Beat", who played all the Electro-tech on Enjoy singles by The Fearless Four and others. **Post-Electric**, who has to include, for greater or lesser reasons, LFO, Black Dog, Shut Up & Dance, Metalheadz, Bandulu, Moody Boyz, Plaid, As One, A Guy Called Gerald, 808 State, Carl Craig, Bally Sagoo, Massive Attack, Tricky, Ponithead, Depth Charge, Chemical Brothers, Underworld, The Shamen, Talvin Singh's Future Sound Of India, Future Sound of London, Jedi Knights, the Clear and Mo' Wax labels, and even, at a pinch, M People.

**Q** "Queen Of Rox", otherwise known as Roxanne Shanté, who bridged the gap between the Electro era and those crashing Brooklyn beats of the mid-80s.

**R** "Rockin' It" by The Fearless Four was one of Electro's greatest moments. Icons who borrowed from Gary Numan, Cat Stevens, Gamble & Huff and Herbie Hancock, they took Kraftwerk's "The Man Machine" for "Rockin' It", added a phrase from Pötzger and created future R&B. **John Robie** was one of the musical architects of Electro, playing keyboards on "Planet Rock", "Looking For The Perfect Beat" and "Renegades Of Funk", Planet Patrol's "Cheap Thrills", "Body Mechanic" by Quadrant Six, C-Bangs' "Get Wet" and "Walking On Sunshine" by Rocker's Revenge. **Run-DMC** may have sounded like stripped down, hard Electro when they started, but by turning the emphasis back on words and beats they blew Electro into the outer darkness.

**S** Smurfs were diminutive Hanna-Barbera cartoon people for whom smurf served as a verb ie "My potson is wearning of We'd better smurf out of here". In 1982, Tyrone Brunson, a DC born bass player, made a dance craze record called "The Smurf". More jazz fusion than Electro, "The Smurf" was answered in an orgy of copyright-busting spelling variations by "The Smair", "Pappa Smurf" and, with far more class, "Salsa Smurph" by **Special Request**. "Smerphe's Dance" by **Spider-D** and "I Can Do It... You Can Do It" Letsmash Acrossdassur by The Micronauts (an alias for journalist and eventual New Jack City scriptwriter Barry Michael Cooper). Also **Shango**, the Afro-cybernetic fusion of Bambataa and Maternal, **Sir Mix-A-Lot**, an Electro pioneer who went ballistic with "Baby's Got Back", **Sly Stone**, exploiting the machine feel of rhythm boxes on "There's A Rot Gom" On back in 1971, all things **spacey**, such as **Star Wars**, **Close Encounters**, **space suits** knocked up from leather and tinfoil, and **Sun Ra**, credited on the Jonzun Crew's **Lost In Space** album. Not forgetting the rich to scratch and not excluding "Was Dog A Doughnut", a rare fling at Techno-pop-fusion by **Cat Stevens**, transmuted into Electro by Jellybean and The Fearless Four.

**T** **Techno Techno Techno**, the man/woman-machine interface, the inevitable spread of music inspired and hammed by technology. For an example of the Techno diaspora, listen to DJ's "Electro Salsa" — pure Electro, recorded in Germany in 1986 and featuring vocals by a young blond named Sven Väth. **Tommy Boy**

**Records** was the New York company run by Tom Silverman and Monica Lynch that released a string of Electro classics, beginning with "Planet Rock". Down in the sunbelt, Luke Skywalker's **2 Live Crew** traded in **tit's 'n' ass**, took Miami Bass to the masses, got sued by George Lucas, were taken to court for obscenity, pioneered rumpshaker videos, and generally gave Electro a filthy reputation.

**U** **UTFO**, robot dancers for Whodini who progressed to a career as rappers by launching the Roxanne saga of the mid-80s. Also, **UK House**, whose roots, as early tracks by the likes of Hotline, Zuzan and Krush show, were as much in NYC Electro as they were in Chicago House.



Unique 3

humming purr of a Pod, the insect whine of the leathered mutants as they storm and sting" Part Gorj command, part Kraftwerk effect, the **Vocoder** was Techno's primary instrument. A studio device that combines voice sounds and synthesizer, thus symbolizing the human-machine interface.

**W** "Woof woof", a barking noise made by B-Boys in lieu of applause when the Electro shuttle lifted off. Often preceded by "Hey buddy buddy", "Wick wick wick" or similar. **Warp 9**, whose spacey productions by Richard Scher, Loti Golden and Jellybean reached warp-speed on the "Light Years Away" dub mix. **West Street Mob**, **Whodini** and **Whiz Kid** all saw their moment and grabbed it. **Wildstyle** the film, the record, the mode of behaviour. Back on the beach, "Whoomp! There It Is" by Tag Team was a 90s "Planet Rock" soundalike that revived old-school Electro with a vengeance, selling more than four million copies to go quadruple platinum.

**X** Xena's "On the Upside", along with Shannon's "Let the Music Play", were quintessential examples of the Mark Lutte/Chris Barbosa sound, the boozing, jerky diva-Electro that launched Latin Hip Hop. **Xploration** as in Jheni curl and Zapata-tashed soul bands such as Midnight Starr going for Electro hits. Also xploration as in spaghetti westerns, kung fu, porno and science fiction, all of which provided Electro with its mise en scene. Down in Miami, R&B and disco veteran (soon to be Miami Bass entrepreneur) Henry Stone jumped on the E7 boom of 1982 with the **Extra T's** and their weird "It Bodge". "It hurts", said the Extra T's, King Spony's **EX Tras** answered with the stun gun Electro-bass of "Haven't Been Ferkned Enough".

**Y** **Yellow Magic Orchestra**, who inspired Afrika Bambaataa back in the days YMO's cover version of Martin Denny's "Firecracker" can be heard on the Bambaataa turntables on the notorious "Death Mix" 12". In fact, Ryuichi Sakamoto's "Rot In Lagos" had anticipated Electro's beats and sounds in 1980, while Naomu Hosono's 1983 **Video Game Music** took the musical use of game noise to a further, maddening conclusion. "Digital sound with body and spontaneity had game-character, no, music as a game" (album notes).

**Z** **Zulu Nation**, Afrika Bambaataa's vision of a global brotherhood linked by a passion for the cyber-street arts of Hip Hop culture. Inspired by Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and George Clinton's "One Nation Under A Groove", it was the predecessor to today's misable englobed info-community of Net heads □

**Sonic Boom** is the drugstore cowboy of post-rock; from Spacemen 3 to Spectrum and EAR, his music is a stoned celebration of the psychedelic properties of the drone. Interview by Edwin Pouncey

**S**onic Boom, also known as Pete Kember, is part of one of the longest, if not always visible, traditions in contemporary music. In the late 80s, Kember and his group Spacemen 3 were notorious not so much for their particular brand of stoned chrome-rock, as for the furious amounts of mind-altering drugs they imbibed in order to push the music further out into the realms of sonic psychotrope.

"Drugs were fundamental in the making of that music," Kember tells me when I spoke to him recently, five years or so after Spacemen 3 imploded in a chemically-induced haze. "We were taking speed, smack and dope onstage but we had a telepathic sense where we knew when the time was right to interact with one another. If it felt right to include two minutes of jamming or if a solo built up perfectly in a minute, that would be it. Drugs didn't stop us communicating like that."

"I don't think you need drugs to understand or enjoy drug influenced music, though. A lot of the ideas behind Spacemen 3's music were to attempt to translate those feelings into sounds so that straight people could share

the experience. I think that's totally valid, but I feel you can't make real drug music without taking drugs, that's a requisite thing."

Today Sonic Boom sits behind the control panel of two different groups, Spectrum and EAR, but he is still involved in the music of Spacemen 3. His new Space Age Recordings label has just reissued two of the group's albums, *Dreamweapon* and *Live in Europe 1989*. The music might be over five years old (a lifetime in pop), but in the context of recent developments in drone-based post-rock, it sounds utterly contemporary.

"When Spacemen 3 were forming, the bands that influenced us were The Stooges, The Velvet Underground, MC5 and The Stones," explains Kember. "The only possible contemporaries we felt we had were The Cramps, who we used to worship and were one of the main reasons the band got together. In 1981-82 we used to play the Cramps-style rockably, our homage to guitarist Bryan Gregory. Then we used to have these one-chord drone-based pieces that were modelled on what I used to play when I first got a guitar

of such an instrument being used during the performance."

"We had already done a couple of gigs where [guitarist] Jason [Pierce] played star and I played *qaz*, which is a Turkish drone instrument," explains Kember. "The guy who owned the star was our old drummer and when he left he took his star back and stole my *qaz*. In one fell swoop we lost both instruments, but we kept playing in that style using guitars."

Kember's music has always thrived on collaboration. Jason Pierce was a crucial component of Spacemen 3, while both Spectrum and EAR feature ever-evolving ensembles that might include Kevin Shields from My Bloody Valentine, AMM drummer Eddie Prevost and Techno Animal's Kevin Martin. "I need really good people who can work on a certain level and contribute," he says. "I'm not a megalomaniac, I'm more than happy to share the glory as well as the work."

To date EAR have played a series of shows supporting US group Pavement, have several albums in the can, and Kember is now waiting to hear the results of an



# sole sonic force

I used to get a lot of flack from the band about playing drone guitar stuff, but then we all began to realise it was more engrossing than playing dodgy rockabilly covers. We looked hard at the two halves of our music and decided to go with the power drone half!

That decision resulted in a series of records and performances that, although overlooked at the time, pushed open a door of musical discovery that has since been an enigma for 90s groups like Stereolab, Labradford, Jessamine and Flying Saucer Attack. Spacemen 3, however, were first through the gate — as *Dreamweapon*, which was recorded live at London's Watershed Arts Centre in 1988, clearly testifies.

"It was quite a weird gig, we were playing in a big room with a bar that they chose to call a foyer and there was a queue of people waiting to be let into a film. A lot of the people present had come to see the film, not us, they wondered what the fuck we were doing there droneing away. We were supposed to do two sets, but after 'Dreamweapon' they paid us off and said they didn't want the second set. Someone in the audience told me afterwards that there was this ted with a quiff behind him who was getting really pissed off with us and one thing he heard him say was, 'To think Elvis died for this!'

*Dreamweapon* is subtitled 'An Evening Of Contemporary Star Music', although there is no trace

EAR project recorded in Los Angeles after the group was invited by Greg Shaw's Bomp! label to make an album of DMT-inspired music.

"DMT is a psychedelic that you smoke and it comes on very quickly to give you this intense trip that's very visual and lasts for 15 minutes instead of the usual eight hours. It's like a psychedelic you can do during your lunch break. The music for this album is a session of drone-based Moog music. I've also got a new Spectrum album coming out on SAR that's influenced by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop and science fiction music from the late 50s and early 60s, where they were trying to conjure up mind pictures of other worlds."

Also out soon on Space Age is an EP featuring Kember and Kranky sound scientists Jessamine. One of the tracks is a theremin-drenched cover of The Silver Apples' "A Pox On You". Another is called "Radiophonic (Musique Concrete Version)." "I haven't heard much [musique concrète] at all," says Kember. "I've read about it more than I've heard it because I wanted to learn about the background of it so that I could understand what I was trying to do with experimental music. I like having a strong sense of naivety in the music. I make it like to do things because of the way they sound and not because I've used all the correct notes." □ Space Age Recordings is distributed in the UK by Plastic Head

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The arctic wastes of Siberia are a burning desert compared to the cryogenically-frozen music of **Thomas Körner**. Biba Kopf meets a musician whose work redefines our notions of cool

# the big chill

**A**ppropriately enough, it snows the day Thomas Körner arrives in London. If anyone deserves a white carpet welcome, it is this German composer, who dedicates his music to reversing the processes of global warming.

Körner's sturming — or perhaps that should read muttering — debut

Nunatak Gongomur describes the last moments of Scott's ill-fated polar expedition. Its successor Torno takes as its model the cooling molecular structure of the body after death. With his third disc comes the self-explanatory title *Pernmafrost*.

Granted, Körner's new CD is quite — meaning a non-terrestrial mineral — is housed in a bright-yellow jacket and is intended as a pianal relief from the cold spell, but it does include a track called "Nuuk", after the capital of Greenland.

"It's my passion, this area where the cold slows down all movement," explains Körner, who punctuates his conversation with a laugh so infectious he ought to can it and sell it to TV sitcom producers. "The process of slowing down and reaching the border between movement and absolute stillness is, for me, the process of simultaneously becoming very sharp and very unfocused, and that, for me, is like a very excellent drug."

This makes me think of Körner as some kind of flâneur getting off on his own near-death experiences.

"It's a kind of design question: this temperature thing. In a cold environment, everything slows down, and everything is going towards stop event. And that is my favourite area in sound — just before it stops. It's an interesting border. It's the same when people, during kind of philosophical evenings, think about life and its end. That's also a kind of border where things stop. It's a deep movement for me, this feeling."

The development of Körner's music from disc to disc is as minutely graded as the pieces they contain. The

desolate blizzard-swept arctic wastes of Nunatak are created by miking up gongs, then rubbing, scraping and electronically treating the sounds so to the point where their origin is unrecognisable. Torno is more left than heard: you don't so much listen as immerse yourself in it. As your ears become accustomed to its silences, you begin to pick out shapes, the shadowy aural equivalents of towering rock formations just about visible through the storm. They don't exactly hold the promise of shelter, but they are useful coordinates to fix on to find your way into the music's desolate beauty.

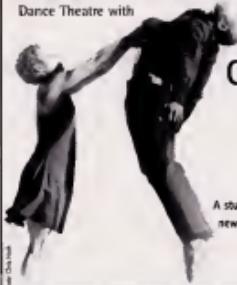
Exactly where does Körner's music exist? His press kit comes a glowing endorsement from an Australian Buddhist, but, despite the music's progress towards silence and nothingness, Körner denies any religious motivation. On the contrary, the confessed non-dancer, who admits the rhythms of his works are far removed from dance culture, feels closest to Techno, which has blasted contemporary music wide open to the point where any extreme goes in its chill-out intermissions. Körner evidently feels enough common ground between Techno's BPM blizzards and the snowstorms of his own music to act as sound designer on the recent Basic Channel related project Porter Ricks, on the appropriately-titled single "Port Of Transition".

Körner has described the guiding principle behind his work as an "Ästhetik der Unterrührung", or aesthetic of decline, a term Einstürzende Neubauten used to apply to their early performances. Unsurprisingly, Körner applies the aesthetic differently. For him it has to do with the way the natural decay of sound resembles decay in nature. The former leads to silence, the latter to death. In both cases they leave an afterglow that imprints itself on the memory. Körner's acceptance of the process is not only personally liberating, it frees his music from the futile sense of entropy that pervades much post-industrial Ambient stuff. Even so, Körner reports that the rare visitors to his Düsseldorf home see some affinity between the post-industrial sites of a city that has seen better days and their hosts music.

"They walk around Düsseldorf and say that it sounds a bit like my music," says Körner. "There are vast areas where there are no used roads, but you always have a distant railroad or a distant highway, creating an envelope of diffused sounds, so when you walk through these abandoned industrial fields, there is this silence, but with very powerful motorised sound reproducing units in the distance. And I would not give up this. I would never move to the country. Well, it's sometimes nice to visit; but after three weeks I have to go to the nearest town, sit down and get some good diesel engines and scraping metal sounds. It's a big pleasure for me." □ All the Thomas Körner discs mentioned above are released by the Bonobo label (fax 00 31 30 51 09 93), except the "Port Of Transition" 12", which is released by Chain Reaction (fax 00 49 30 832 4947).

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Depending on your point of view, American group **Tortoise** are either cutting edge avant rock, or ponderous Prog revivalists. Either way, the buzz generated by their elliptical, cuneiform music is growing louder by the day. Interview by Rob Young



Doug McCombs



# getting up to speed

**T**ortoise. Tortoise. Hardly sounds like the juice to spark our accelerated future, doesn't it? Promising in the light of all the stealthy *Speeds* and *Bahns* and *Gabbas* of the moment. As a group they look to be easy pickings — US avant rock with crazy instruments! — much as one of their ancient ancestors looked to Achilles (but he lost the race).

Something about tortoises seems to cause obsession: think of Des Essenes' jewel-inlaid specimen in *Against Nature*; or the passage in LaMonte Young's ideological revue *Dream Music* which begins: "In the life of the tortoise the drone is the first sound..." And English author Tony White, in his forthcoming novel *Low Fidelity*, describes combing London for every record by the American group Tortoise.

"I slid the album out of the corner bag. The guy in Record And Tape Exchange was right. It was in a plain cardboard sleeve. A simple design of three white circles in orange squares was crudely screenprinted onto the front of the sleeve. I slid the record out of the cover. The labels were simply numbered '1' and '2', and featured what looked like photocopies from illustrations of the anatomical dissection of a tortoise. A crudely printed insert fell out onto the counter. Having been going on about them for so long



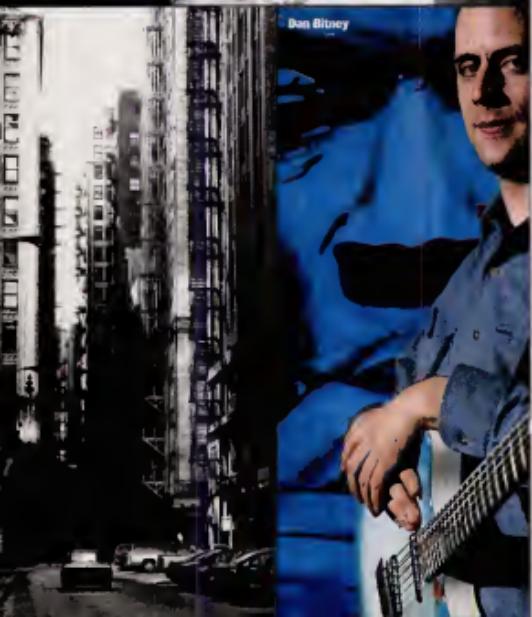




Dave Pajo



Dan Bilezikian



Doug McCrabb

I finally played all this stuff to James. He just said, "It's lugubrious aren't they?"

Lugubrious (adjective): doleful, mournful, dismal. "We actually got the name from John Fahey's publishing company," says John McEntire, one-fifth of Tortoise. "I wish we were that smart."

So here we are gathered around a mock-weathered table in a dockside Bristol pub, trying hard to drum some sense out of the huge approving buzz that greeted Tortoise when they arrived in this country. The group have driven here in a golden van, and will later be performing on board ship the *Thekla*, permanently moored near the city's Arnolfini Gallery. Present: McEntire, shorn-headed bassist Douglas McCrabb, David Pajo, who remains mute throughout the entire encounter, producer/sound-guy Casey Rice, by far the most effusive of the posse, and Daryl Moore, whose ultra-lo-key Soul State Sound label last year released a 7" that backed up a pair of Tortoise's abstract dromenies, and who later spins some impromptu textures into the group's live mix from two decks at the back of the stage. Absent are Dan Bilezikian and John Hemdon, who are apparently too wasted to take part in this evening's tête-à-tête.

As has been reported elsewhere, the group aren't terribly keen to deliver eye-bugging insights into what they do, but more than this, and despite their tresspass after the previous night's jam-packed show at London's Splash Club, they're almost made to feel that deep probing can't warrant here, made to feel you should listen, not ask questions — or that the questioning should be in the listening.

It has to be. Tortoise's wordless expanses or mini-sonic adventures reached their apogee with the track "Died" on the new album *Milions Now Living Will Never Die*, a moshier journey that audibly splices together polar opposites from cosmic rock to Steve Reich's minimalist-instrument music. Far away from both the breast-beating self-indulgences self-mythology of US groups such as Green Day or Hole, and the quirked-out surrealism that mired their immediate antecedents — Sirens, Trammps, Water, Pavement, etc. — Tortoise music is like but not lush, intelligent but not intellectual, complex but seductive; it trades on studio-bound approaches pioneered by Leo Macro, Jamaican dub, and German producer Conny Plank (as if those production gurus had been locked in their booths with the master tapes of Eric Dolphy's *Up To Lunch* LP).

"Our backgrounds are all relatively similar," says John McEntire when I ask what factors helped birth this mysterious beast. "We've all been playing in bands for at least ten years in various forms. We all pretty much grew up on everything that revolved around US hardcore and British post-punk and stuff like that. That whole period in the 80s when it got away from that sort of influence."

Doug McCrabb is a little more specific about the welter of influences that are brought to bear on their sound. "It seemed like there were a lot of bands when I first started listening to music that were, like, totally off the wall, their approach to things would be nuts, most of the time, but really bizarre... It was a really great time for me when I started to discover music in the late 70s, so much stuff going on that was really different from anything I experienced before. I never bought records before, all I heard was on the radio, so in the later part of the 80s, even though I have nothing like a singer-songwriter rock band tradition, I'm still a part of that too with the groups I've been involved with. Did you ever hear Breadwinner? [a group that featured current Labradford bass player Bobby Done] They were the paranoiacs of American Prog punk, three or four years ago. They're really great, there's no pretension about what they do. I couldn't figure out what they were doing if I spent ten years, their changes are so fucked up."

Despite the extraordinary larder of tools, gadgets and instruments the group has raided — acoustic and electronic drums, vibraphone, antique Moog synths, hidden foot pedals triggering rhythm loops, sampler, djembe, piccolo bass, melodica, and FX galore — Tortoise aren't lush, neither does their trademark dry production appear particularly 'erotic.' Nor, indeed, are they on a conscious rescue mission to drag US rock away from frat-surrealism and goof-off whimsy. There's a determined air of functionalism in the music that's amplified by the embossed cardboard packaging of their releases (*Rhythms, Resolutions And Clusters*, the 'verso' album accompanying last year's debut, looked something like a wartime ration book), solemn

onstage delivery and avoidance of discussing musical detail in conversation. Tracks range in length from a couple of minutes up to the 20 minute mark, giving rise to the feeling that ideas are allowed to run for their 'natural' course with a minimum of compositional input. Has this always been the case, I wonder, or has it been a long process of melding into a group with a collective consciousness?

"We never really thought about it that much," says McEntire, an answer that's repeated throughout the meeting like a mantra. "It was just this collection of people and, along with that, the instruments that most of us were proficient with didn't necessarily include playing the guitar or singing. So we decided, why bother with that?"

"It was never really a decision," adds Doug, "it just sort of happened that way. It happens in a wide range of degrees, the process is never the same really. It goes from having a complete thought-out composition before it goes to tape — maybe not completely thought-out, but at least structurally. It can go from that to having absolutely nothing, no idea of what we're gonna do until we sit down and start to tape it."

**S**poken like a true abstract expressionist. And well he might: after all, Tortoise share the Chicago cityscape with a prodigious lineage of musicians. "It's nice to think about the spirit of that [heritage] being alive in the city today," says John McEntire. "We were talking about that yesterday: since the teen years in Chicago there's been a great tradition of music, ever since a lot of the African-Americans moved north, and this explosion of Vaudeville, and all these instrument makers being located there, and all these great things that happened in the 50s jazz scene, the 50s and 60s soul music."

"There's a guy that was our room-mate for a while, Jeff Parker," says Doug, "he was just inducted into the AACM [the post-free jazz Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, whose members include Art Ensemble Of Chicago]. He's played with us on some stuff. He's our portal link to the AACM. He's a great guitar player, but he's our age. He's the youngest member now of the AACM."

In Tortoise's Chicago rehearsal space — which doubles as their apartment — two huge painted heads of John Coltrane gaze impassively down upon their practice sessions. So, despite their steady concentration and onstage facial contortions, do they ever follow their master in the sound-what towards transcendence? In answer, McEntire puts on a robot voice. "I usually have too many things to think about, like, 'OK, must switch sampler to next program — turn up Aux Send two — hold down fader six, — wibble' — it's kinda hard when you have to do that. But maybe after 18 weeks..."

"He'll be in a trance," says Doug, miming computer-an-gestures.

Casey: "You guys better wait till I start moving blindfold."

McEntire: "Just a little braise on the faders..."

**F**eeling in the dark... we discuss improvisation, electric jazz, Miles, Herbie Hancock, what Casey Rice calls "that space funk shit." "I don't think I would ever want to do a completely improvised set," muses Doug, "but the idea that more and more improvisation can take place within the set is interesting to me." McEntire elaborates: "Not on a note to note level, but on like a larger scale. Shifting the focus of the set at these intervals, not in as much of a predetermined way as we do now."

This interest has brought the group to the attention of James Lavelle's Mo' Wax imprint, and a remix project by UNKLE is due to be released in the spring. It's a timely



convergence, born of an astonishing degree of mutual respect between the two outfits.

"It's a bit daunting really," UNKLE's Tim Goldsworthy tells me a couple of weeks later. "For me it's the biggest remix we've ever done. That's the whole reason they blew me away to begin with: because if I was a musician that could pick up a guitar — I'm too lazy to learn — I would be doing Tortoise stuff for sure, without a doubt."

Somehow, it's possible to detect a land-bridge being constructed between these discrete commentaries. "I think a lot of people expect Mo' Wax people just to be into their Hip-Hop and their Jungle, but I think it all comes from experimental rock and jazz," says Goldsworthy. And sure enough, while in London McEntire blew a large proportion

of his expenses on a pile of new abstract grooves and drum 'n' bass pronos, and took time out to DJ at a small Soho club.

I put it to Tortoise that some listeners have confused their long-form, exploratory mechanics with the empty complexities of Prog — omnia to mention that one friend compared "Glass Museum", a track from the new album, to a bridging passage by Yes. "I always consider it not

relating back to the specific genre, but as more of a total sound experience," counters McEntire. "And I guess that partly comes from my background of studying a lot of 20th century classical music. Thinking of music in terms of how it fills up the spectrum, and larger rhythms, and the way it moves through time. Prog rock — that comparison doesn't mean much to me."

"Why don't they compare it to Varese or something like that?" asks an exasperated Casey. "He was a little wacky for his time, there wasn't a narrative thing going on, he was making compositions where he wasn't following all the rules..."

"Who?" Doug asks.

"Varese? Like, K Marted-out Harry Partch or something."

"No way, man!" shouts John. "Punk rock, from day one!"

**A**s the interview breaks up, Casey delivers his summing-up: "Tortoise don't have to kiss anyone's ass, they've got it on their own terms, that's the beauty of it." Not surprising really: when you're a tortoise, ass is a long way to stretch. □ Millions Now Living Will Never Die is out now on City Slings (through RTMD/Disco). Tortoise tour the UK this month with Stereolab see *Soundings* for details.

What's going on? Fusion, that most despised of musical genres, has suddenly become an essential reference point for musicians such as Goldie, LTJ Bukem and Howie B. In turn, a first generation fusion head like **John McLaughlin** is revitalising his career by exploring the new technologies of drum 'n' bass. Paul Stump talks to McLaughlin, and discovers that everything in the jungle is rosy

# muso

It's one of the more curious phenomena of recent developments in musical taste. The movers and shakers and cutting-edge crusaders of the sonic millennium, upon whose subversions of past practice and performance rest so many needs and desires, appear more concerned with recreating the music of earlier epochs. Moreover, they are taking their cues from music which, by common consent, has long been branded as culturally and musically irredeemable for so we thought! For instance fusion, it seems, still counts.

Even in the futuristic forests of drum 'n' bass, the past protagonists of this most venerated of musical genres exert a powerful hold. LTJ Bukem cites Return To Forever's *Romantic Warrior* as a definitive influence. Goldie goes for The Yellowjackets as his current group-of-choice. Meanwhile, in these pages Howie B and The Durutti Column's Viri Reilly have recently solemnly stated their allegiance to John McLaughlin, perhaps the greatest *bita none* of that whole 70s cheesecloth-dad bacchanalia of speed, solos and Marshallamps.

And so as *bêtes noires* go, John McLaughlin is a pretty happy one right now. After 30 rollercoastering years in music, he's hauling himself around the European promotional circuit to publicise a new CD. It's being launched into what appears to be a reaval of interest in his music past, but McLaughlin is on a roll in '96, installed in London's Langham Hilton hotel he looks the picture of expansive well-being.

The new record, *The Promise*, is billed as a kind of retrospective, which fits neatly with the apparent 'rediscovery' of his back catalogue by a new generation. "I don't look at it that way, though, as an autobiography," McLaughlin claims. "Let's face it, every album is autobiographical in some way."

Like his younger admirers, McLaughlin is still a fusion-head, but he is not that interested in fusion as a generic term in the popular context of loud muso

thrasharama, regarding it more as a framework for making music as he sees fit. Where did the drive to combine musical styles come from?

"If anything, I would pick out the first time I heard the collaboration between Miles and Gil Evans. You must remember the progress of my musical learning: I started off with classical, then moved to Mississippi delta blues, then flamenco and then jazz. Yes, Sketches Of Spain and especially Miles Ahead, for me, one of the greatest collaborations ever: there's blues and jazz and flamenco chords, and Miles just killing on it — such sensitivity. Two separate cultures, but they're made for each other. Coltrane saw that too."

"Going even further back, what about Ravel? The Piano Concerto For The Left Hand, and so much else. Is he trying to do fusion? I don't think so. He just loved Spanish music, ended up writing it into his own work, he loved it so much. Stravinsky loved jazz — and Ravel too, again. How about his Piano Concerto In G? Very jazzy. Ravel visited America and heard jazz, he was astounded by it. He transposed a jazz trumpet player's improvising, and back in Paris showed the transcription to his favourite trumpeter, who told him it was unplayable. Then there's Bartók, and his use of Slavic folk tunes. I'm not trying to write fusion music, [but] when I write, styles tend to fall in with each other."

They seem to be falling in with each other slightly differently these days. Much early 70s fusion was a torrent of Heavy Metal sound and fury (think of the near hysterical intensities of McLaughlin's *Devotion* album, or his collaboration with Tony Williams and Larry Young in *Lifetime*, or with Carlos Santana on *Love, Devotion, Surrender*, and we haven't even mentioned The Mahavishnu Orchestra...) Those characteristics have now dissipated, to be replaced by the more fluid, post-bop orientated jazz input of John Scofield, Bill Frisell and even McLaughlin's own *Free Spirits* trio with organist Joey De Francesco and drummer Dennis Chambers. The

# in the promised land





#### Mahavishnu Orchestra: *Mark One*

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Promise features two crowd-pleasing, steroid-charged supersessions (with Mike Brecker, Jim Beard, Don Alias, Chambers et al), but even here, the music is more freeform than anything the guitarist has done since the organised cacophony of Extrapolation (1969).

"Yeah," says McLaughlin, "but there's a mean backbeat on those new tracks, because ironically enough I wanted to move in a more rock direction. When you get [James] Genus and Chambers and Alas doing this incredible fatback boogaloo, and a sax player like Mike, who's probably the greatest jazz horn player today but who knows all about rock, you're going to get a harder feel."

Sounds like a new map of muso hell, right? But the kind of robotic, gaga-lunk musoading customarily associated with those names is surprisingly absent, over rubber-burning tempos, the group locks up some seriously raucous noise. "Right? We get this structure but only as an anchor, as a launching pad for... delirium, where we can play alone but also play with and over each other, to get up each other's noses."

So we're talking collective improvisation, no less. Not a Mahavishnu trait, surely? "We used to do that — on stage. And anyway, don't forget, collective improvisation isn't that new — it goes all the way back to New Orleans."

In *The Wire* 142, Simon Hopkins suggested that McLaughlin's bugbear was that his compositions were so dazzlingly proficient they tended to detract from the spontaneity of the pieces (McLaughlin takes this graciously and as a compliment) and diffused the energy of the early Mahavishnu Orchestra experiments. What does McLaughlin think of that period today? What, for instance, does he make of his 1974 orchestral monster, *Apocalypse?*

"It's great! I love my old records — with all their glancing, halting faults! I know what my intentions were were. They're the same today, but you can look back in hindsight and see what went wrong. Sometimes I hear my old stuff and I feel great, and then I hear something and go, 'Shit, what a stupid thing to play.' I mean, why? But some of it's terrific. There's a tape of what a good performance of the Mahavishnu One in Cleveland in 1971 and it is so on, it's frightening. I was on my knees to the record label 'Put it out, put it out, please!' It was a great time.

"Sure, there were problems. Come the final six months of Mahavishnu Mark One, neither Jan Hammer or Jerry Goodman were speaking to me. They were just behaving like assholes, I suppose. The band split up, but after a while Jerry called me up and we made it up and we're good friends again. But Jan . . ." McLaughlin sighs. "He still won't talk to me. I tried to patch it up but he — well, he's got Bonny Rio or Miami Vice or whatever it is and he may be a millionaire but he's still acting like an asshole."

McLaughlin is a little ambivalent now about jazz rock. After 1976, he says, most of it was "temble," mechanical, West Coast coffee-table, lava-lamp funk, music for elevators with the down button jammed on. But by then McLaughlin had other fish to fry, while hawking his speed-freak, ear-blasting Mahavishnu chops around the world's studios, his parallel project, the all-acoustic Shakti, was taking things a little more seriously.

A natural outgrowth from the unplugged ethnofusion of 1970's *My God's Beyond* groundbreaking and still underrated session that developed out of McLaughlin's sessions with Miles on *Bitches Brew* and *In A Silent Way*, Shakti was one of the first genuine attempts by a popular Western musician to use Eastern musical language rather than an adjunct to his own, to attempt to communicate with Oriental sonic pecularities on its terms.

"I was studying South Indian music, Carnatic music and vina [a seven-stringed precursor of the sitar] at Wesleyan University in 70-71," recalls McLaughlin. "I love the vina. If you hear Dagha play vina, for example, it'll blow your mind. I've been attracted to Indian thought for a long time, since before Indian music, and I'm still attracted today [along with Santana and Alice Coltrane, in the 1970s McLaughlin was an acolyte of the guru Sri Chinmoy]. I started hanging out with these Indian guys I made at Wesleyan because a lot of us were of the same age group. One day Jagatguru — my teacher's percussionist, later in Shakti — introduced me to his nephew, [bassist] L Shankar. I knew Zakir Hussain from when I started Hindustani music in 69. So we started to play together — for fun, at first, then a few little concerts in churches, schools, things like that. It was beautiful — North Indian [Zakir] and South Indian [Rasheed and L Shankar]."

The influence of the subcontinent infuses all of McLaughlin's music — rhythmically in the organically shifting polyrhythms that frequently launch his solos, and also in the yearning harmonic intervals that give his finest melodies a ghazal-like lusciousness. The influence of actual Indian performance is duly acknowledged on *The Promise* on a track entitled 'The Wish', which features Trikot Gurtu on percussion, and a strange R&B

“I took some drum 'n' bass tapes and played them to Dennis Chambers. He couldn't believe it. He said: Who the fuck is that? ”

Manfred Eicher was a bit. "McLaughlin laughs. "He was a bit, shall we say, overpowering to work with, but it was a wonderful project to be involved in."

Perhaps the most interesting tracks on *The Promise* are two minute-long miniatures 'English Jam', a Fiszel-like furnace of guitar noise, and the very complex 'Tokyo Decadence', which, in a neat closure of the circle, features McLaughlin getting to grips with the rhythmic neurons of drum 'n' bass.

Perhaps it's inevitable that a musician like McLaughlin should have made the complexities of the programming even more busy and intricate than ever, but "Tokyo Decadence" is an undeniably exciting rapprochement, even if, at one minute in length, the experiment seems a trifle on the tentative side.

"Jungle is brilliant!" he enthuses. "There's good stuff, and of course so much of it. I took some drum 'n' bass tapes and played them to Dennis Chambers. He couldn't believe it. He said 'Who the fuck is that?' Of course it wasn't anybody playing, nobody could play like that, not even Dennis. But that's the technology now, that's what you can do, and you have to use the technology to its full extent now, that's the music you want to play, if you want to do new things. I intend to do plenty of things with this technology".

This is refreshing to hear. McLaughlin's Mahavishnu career — in its '70s incarnation, anyway, the guitarist formed a second, generally lamentable, version of the group, Mahavishnu Mark Two, in the mid-'80s — submerged itself forever in the analogue choraless of *Inner Worlds* (1976), a bilious, all-delay-systems-go-freak-out-of-phasing, *Antennae and Echochamber* Continued on page 65

Continued on page 65

# Frank talking

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# nothing



# is sacred

Two decades down the line, **Faust** are still the wayward guerrillas of Krautrock, a sonic wrecking crew storming the citadels of culture and good taste. Mike Barnes talks to the group's Jean-Hervé Peron about the making of the new album *Rien*, and the problems of organising live performances that encompass exploding TVs, chainsaws, helicopters and a sheep

"Faust's role in '96 will be the continuation of our work, nothing more but not one bit less. Listen to the fish. Listen to the bones. Look for the essence. If need be, destroy the shells. SILENCE... Sorry, I got carried away."

— Fax received from Faust's Jean-Hervé Peron, February 96

When I interviewed Faust in 1992 after their UK comeback performance at London's Marquee (*The Wire* 108), Jean-Hervé Peron told me the group was planning to build a wall on stage during a future live show. He was contemptuous of Pink Floyd's famous construction as it was only made out of polystyrene blocks. When I spoke to Peron again recently on the phone to his home in Germany, I asked if this idea had been realised in the intervening period.

"Oh, yes," he replies. "When we have an idea at least we have a go at it. In Atlanta [Georgia, during a 1994 performance] we had four bricklayers and they built a wall. We've done it, that's right. We're talking about cement and bricks."

Until a reunion show at the Prinzenbar, Hamburg in 1990, Faust, one of the most notorious and ambitious of all the Krautrock groups, had been silent for 15 years. Another two year silence followed that Hamburg show, and after a 19 year absence from these shores, their much publicised return was uncompromising, ugly and spectacular — with an array of power tools and sheet metal they temporarily transformed the mainstream rock venue into a deconstruction site.

Even now, Peron feels "deeply moved" by the enthusiasm that Faust has attracted since it resumed activities, and which has fuelled their motivation to continue. "Since [the Marquee] I am aware that we carry a responsibility towards our audience, that we have a 'roll' in the scene," he explains. "This was a frightening revelation for me at the time as I was not at all prepared for such a 'serious' response — we had been producing our music quite unaware of what it does."

There has been little Faust activity in the country since that Marquee show: a slightly ramshackle (what else?) concert at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall last year with

minimalist pioneer Tony Conrad, and the release of two expensive (and hard to acquire) import live CDs of indifferent sound quality by the Atlanta, Georgia-based Table Of The Elements label. But in 1994, Faust went to America for what would prove to be a memorable tour (also organised by Table Of The Elements). The circumstances were adverse, though, as the group had effectively been reduced to a duo. Peron takes up the story:

"With Faust we've had many changes. We've lost one member — I won't name names — who's gone through lots of heavy trouble with alcohol, we lost another one, many trouble with some other drugs [Johann Immler]. So to tell you the end, in the States there were just two of us. It was just a big adventure, we decided to just jump

"With Zappi [drummer and percussionist Werner Obermaier] and I, you could almost say it was like a desperate move. If nothing works, shit on it, we'll do it. And if there are only two of us we'll do it." It was halfway desperate."

And so, aided by some "fantastic guest musicians" — including Keiji Hano, pianist Erling Wold, and guitarists Michael Morley, of the New Zealand groups Gate and The Dead C, and Steven Ray Lobb — Faust made its initial foray into the heartlands of America.

**"In the States you cannot get explosives as easily as I can. I have friends here in Europe: it's quite easy."**

**We like explosions "**

Faust have just released their first studio album for 20 years, the excellent and uncompromising *Rien*. The group were in the vanguard of the Krautrock scene in the early 70s, producing some of the most avant garde music of that era. Its extremity was accentuated by their innovative use of editing. The final product of the studio sessions was always to a greater or lesser extent moulded from raw material by producer/swengal figure Uwe Nentwich. The purest example of this approach was *The Faust Tapes* (1973), a collage of two years' worth of recordings. Their live performances were more spontaneous affairs, where jackhammers and pinball machines augmented standard rock instrumentation.

For *Rien*, the producer's role fell to the US improvisor/composer Jim O'Rourke. Peron explains how this working relationship was formed: "We have been introduced to Jim O'Rourke through Jeff [Hunt of Table Of The

Elements] I didn't know about Jim before, except for a few records that Jeff had sent me, and I liked it very much. But then I met Jim and we did a couple of concerts together, not special, and then we recorded a few things. We left all the tapes in the States and Jim started to work on it, and that's a miracle. I call that some acoustic surgery."

The press material for Ren does not shy away from highlighting O'Rourke's "considerable" input. His job was to assemble an album from the raw materials of one studio session and several live DATs. I asked Pern if O'Rourke's role was similar to the one that Uwe Nettbeck used to have as an unofficial group member in the 70s.

"No, it's not like Uwe Nettbeck at all, it's absolutely different. First of all, Jim is an excellent, classically built musician, and he is a very discreet, very respectful person, where Uwe is not at all a musician — which is OK. And Uwe was straightforward and very strong, which Jim is not. Jim is very reserved, very, very correct. And Jim never tells us what to do or what not to do — quite the contrary. He always asked us, 'Is the OK, I'm doing this and that', and we'd say, 'Yeah, fine, but could you change this?', and immediately he did it.

"Jim's work is called here 'the producer', which is fine with me, but a normal producer is in the studio when you are recording and would say, 'This direction, stop. No good', which Uwe did sometimes. We make the music we want. We don't want anybody, even if it's bad, to tell us what to do or not what to do. This is what we are. We are making experimental music, so it would be no point if somebody would say 'No, not this'. It would be like so much a contradiction. So call it a producer, but he is more of the magic mixer. He is a post-producer. He produced all alone with the tapes."

Why do *Faust* need producers like Nettbeck and O'Rourke at all?

"Very good question, right, right. You are now touching the nerve. In the States, that was only Zappa and I. Zappa is the drummer, I am basically the bass player, so we are sort of the earth. At the time we were missing [keyboard player] Johann Immler, who is the fire, the spirit. And what other choice did we have? Studio work of *Faust* would probably have died, because Zappa and I have quite a different attitude to music — bass and drums, we're down to earth, we're two things."

"I said if we want to make *Faust*'s flame survive, we've got to make compromise and accept the fact that there is someone more competent — way more competent than us — to edit and cut, because this is not the type of thing that either Zappa or I would be able to do."

"Somehow Jim has assimilated all the *Faust* spirit from *Faust* [the group's debut album] and *Faust So Far* [its second album], but mostly from the first *Faust*, with all these bits and pieces."

"I felt a bit ashamed to say that that out of bits and pieces Jim has made a *Faust* thing. There is an ambivalent meaning with Ren. If you say 'C'est Ren de Faust' [the spoken announcement at the start of the CD], now you can look at it both ways, you know what I mean? It's 'Nothing from *Faust*', and it's 'Nothing from *Faust*. I don't know how thick we have to spread this, but that's what it is very ambivalent.'

Despite the absence of Immler — whom Pern refers to as "the best mixer in the world" — he is delighted with the outcome.

"Oh, wow, yes, certainly, absolutely. I was amazed I'll tell you something funny. Jim O'Rourke managed to make a piece out of bits and pieces making loops, old-fashioned loops and I listened — he sent us from time to time cassettes, so we could keep track of what was going on — and he sent us this piece and I said, 'Wow, that's Zappa drumming!' He made a loop of something very typical of Zappa — and after 20 years that Zappa has not done this kind of drumming, it was there again exactly. And Jim felt it, put it together and that's why I say surgery, because it is synthetic. And we made a piece out of it ['Listen To The Fish'] which we now play live. So that's how close Jim reached the *Faust* spirit."

Jim O'Rourke was an inspired **J** Jim O'Rourke was an inspired but also a logical choice for this "magic mixer" role. His music — especially his solo compositions — has been informed from an early age by an awareness of the possibilities of constructing music from tape edits. As a schoolboy his hobbies included scrutinising Teo Macero's production work with Miles Davis.

"I was nine or ten," he recalls over the phone from Chicago, "and I was listening to *Blowin' Brew* and I noticed that the same bass clarinet solo was on two different sides. Once I noticed that, I started listening closely in those terms and I started noticing that the album was fairly constructed on tape."

"Well of course, I believed it was quite an honour to work on their record. And in general the way I work is similar to how the old *Faust* records are made. I can tell from listening to the old *Faust* records that these weren't records of a band setting up and playing and recording, and that they were obviously being constructed by somebody else. So the band had always appealed to me that way more than a lot of other bands from that period, because they were much more a construct than, say, *Can* was. I think these old *Faust* records were crazy people in a barn and it was taped by Uwe, and Uwe would put stuff together."

O'Rourke agrees that Ren was an attempt to make a *Faust* record (as opposed to a *Faust/Jim O'Rourke* record). Well aware of their back catalogue and their methods of music-making, he acknowledges that "those ideas sort of soaked into my head".

"Once I got a certain amount of stuff done, it would start telling me what it needed," he continues. "If it didn't start to have its own identity I would be failing. That's just the

Werner 'Zappi' Biermäier (top) and Jean-Hervé Pern

PHOTO: ZEP-HAII



way I work. If they gave it to Bill Lexwell or whoever, it would sound like one of their records I don't mean that as a criticism, it's just how a lot of people work. I like to be as selfless about everything as possible because that's the reason I do stuff, just to learn somehow. I think there's an album's worth of stuff that I threw away, because it wasn't appropriate — it was conceptually wrong.

Ironically, O'Rourke later tells me, "I really wanted it to sound like a record of people, a band playing. I really didn't want it to sound as constructed as it is. There's a certain amount of construction to any Faust record, but I didn't want it to sound as foregrounded as it could be, so there was a lot of covering up work."

"I think the Faust album overlapped the *brise glace* record [when in *Vanitas*, which O'Rourke played on and produced]. They were both constructed, so I was ready to do the Faust album. That was a warm-up in a way. It's a good key to the Faust record."

*Ren* was an ascetic project for O'Rourke. It took a year of painstaking work, partly because he had "about the minimum equipment you could work with to make that album," and partly because of his methods of working. He tells me that one very short section of *Ren* took a week to complete. "I didn't leave my room for a long time; I'm getting a life now." This uncompromising approach both baffled and impressed Peron.

"He would really spend a week, picking three or four tones — a musical phrase — and he would make like an opera and dub it, put it in water and dry it and dub it. He is crazy. He is a genius. I must tell you. Look at the results, man."

Faust have always been an individual, uncompromising live group, giving equal importance to the music and the presentation. What is Faust now? Is it a flexible, confrontational performance art troupe, rather than an integrated rock group?

"Well, well, well ... I'm not sure if I can answer this question," says Peron. "Sometimes I see it more like preparing to have some music and I think more of the ways of how to present it — a piece of art, a presentation. And at other times I think of very reduced presentation, reduced to nothing, just pure sound, pure music. So it oscillates. I don't want to pin myself down or pin Faust down."

"We have had a spontaneous idea in the form of a message that I had to carve on stage with my chainsaw. It is 'ARTERROR'! I do not know if the chainsaw obliged me to drop the 'T' or if I wanted to write it this way. We are somewhere in the Art, somewhere in the Terror, and, thanks mighty, we are in Error."

This line of enquiry comes from having read reports of Faust's 1994 US concerts. Although they were forced by circumstance to play with guest musicians, they more than compensated by realising some of Peron's wildly ambitious conceptual ideas.

At the heart of Faust is an innocence. Peron doesn't listen to much other music. "To keep my ears and head open," he says. This sets the tone for his highly idiosyncratic take on the world. When — as an intro to this subject — I comment, somewhat blandly, that the group did some 'unusual' things onstage in America, he is genuinely nonplussed.

"What could that be? OK. It might sound or look unusual. You are probably talking about welding on stage, or ... What could that be? [Pause] Oh, the sheep. Look, I have the possibility to let all my fantasies and dreams loose. So I have sort of visions like everybody has, but I have the possibility to realize them."

"We make so much destruction," he continues, "because we do destroy many things on stage. And this is because of the musical sound of it and also because of the optical message of it. So what is so obvious after all this chaos? What is the symbol of peace, of quiet, silence? It's a fish or it's a sheep, things that are silent. They do have things to say, but you have to be quiet to understand it."

"We tried it once [the sheep], it was an outdoor concert in Hartford. We built a very cosy place for the sheep, an improvised stable off stage. And when the moment was right, after the heavy destruction, it was a couple of tones hovering over the stage. I had to calm the vibrations. I went off stage, put the sheep on my shoulders, which was quite easy. The sheep felt very confident and I walked around with the sheep. And I was very lucky, it worked, in the silence you could hear 'Baaa', which was the message."

In Atlanta, at the same outdoor show where the wall was built, Faust made full use of the immediate environment.

"That was quite a venue," Peron recalls. "Outside we had an electric plant, a power

plant with all this 'booz' in the background. That was great, man. We had a hospital a couple of yards away and a train coming like every 20 minutes. 'Eeeeeeoooww!' Jesus, if you don't use this, you can never call yourself an experimental band. So we had our poor guy doing the moan and we said, 'You must mix the rats!'

Why do you destroy TVs onstage? "Television is no good, it's very simple. There is no mystical message, the message is clear and plain. Kill TV. TV is going to get us very soon. TV has got our kids already. They're gone. I don't want it to get me. It's so bad, I do have to destroy it and I like it every time I bash a TV. I won't do it any more because I don't want to repeat myself and be tongue-in-cheek. It's also not very good for the environment, all these glass splinters."

This ritual destruction of television sets is a tame, environmentally-friendly exercise

**"Jim would spend a week picking three or four notes, make it into an opera and dub it, put it in water and dry it and dub it. He is crazy"**

Jim O'Rourke

compared to Faust's use of explosives — and their destructive capacity is something that Peron wants to test.

"Yeah, yeah, but it's hard," he claims. "In the States you cannot get explosives as easily as I can. I do have friends here in Europe, it's quite easy. We like heavy smoke and then again we don't like the stage smoke, we like heavy duty outdoor smoke. I don't know why. I have no explanation for that."

"We like explosions, it's like the bang when you meditate and somebody comes from the back and gently hits you on your shoulder blades to make you straighten up. This is what it is. Oh yeah, it's pretty loud and pretty dangerous [laughs]."

"Our project ... We would like to work to find a venue and very old buildings, that no one would mind if during the concert the walls could be blown up. No danger for anybody. It's for optical and acoustic [reasons]."

When Peron says, "No doubt we shall continue to experiment in all directions, we shall leave parts as soon as they are discovered and burst every door that stands in our way", it's tempting to take the last part of the statement literally. Faust seems to have a preoccupation with destruction. Is it a confrontational device or a cathartic act, or something else entirely?

"If myself want to reduce things to their essence," he replies. "Zappi would answer to this that he destroys things because of the sound it produces when they depart from their stable form. We do not want to leave any possibility unused. One thing is for certain — it will not become a habit, this 'violence' thing don't take roots."

This idea of destroying buildings is far more ambitious than just building a wall, but Peron is a man not easily put off by mere practicalities.

"We would like to play with helicopters and we've tried many times — no way," he explains. "And Mr Stockhausen just picks up the phone and says to the army, 'I would like 20 helicopters', and he's got it."

Apparently, Peron's intention was to have the helicopters drop scrap metal onto huge steel plates during a performance. Was this a serious notion that he tried to put into practice?

"Oh, yes, every gig. The first thing was to get some old TVs, try to get explosives and helicopters. And we didn't give up. Every gig we'd spend hours in our hotel on the telephone. Sometimes we were very, very close. It's not that the army didn't want to, but at the end someone would say, 'No, we can't do it'."

Wasn't this a rather unusual request for the National Guard to cope with?

"Well if you want, but I don't think it is," Peron replies without a trace of irony.

Unfazed by their inability to borrow some helicopters, Peron and Jeff Hunt came up with an even more ambitious idea for a unique improvised call-and-response performance to be staged at an unlikely venue.

On Friday 13 May Faust and their collaborators performed on the top of the isolated Desolation Canyon, south of Furnace Creek, in Death Valley, California, with the audience assembled in the valley below. "The desert, the silence, the wind," says Peron. "You feel brave first. I'm going to conquer all this. I'm going up the hills, and make some extravagant sound, I'm gonna be the one! You feel like this and within hours the desert puts you back where you belong, one grain of sand. I would very much like to do it again, because I would start straight on with the right spirit. I wouldn't come with this idea that we are going to conquer the silence, [but] we are going to play with the silence, which would be much better."

"We had lots of problems, technical problems, co-ordination problems, water problems. Michael Morley arrived when everything was finished. Keiji Hano didn't have his sunglasses [laughs]. But ever so great."

"The idea was to play unplugged and to make long distance calls. One would use a dugendoo, one would make the Basque war cry. Keiji would use his chimes, Zappi had a few metal scraps. We would use stone or click or whistles and each of us would be placed far apart on the tops of the hills and send signals in the silence and wait for the answer — or no answer. This was the concept."

"It was very hard to realize it the way I thought of it, because of the wind. If people are under the wind [downwind] they can blow and shout and it's no use. We should have used people who are used to it, like Indians — they would certainly make long distance calls. Or people that live in mountains — they have a way to whistle that

comes for kilometres. Now I know this and next time we do this experiment, I know how to prepare it. For the performers [it was] very enriching. You learn a lot. It gives you lots of power and lots of — you are being humble."

Since the US tour, Faust has returned to full strength with Johann Immler back in the frame.

"You cannot imagine how like a child I was when I heard that Johann was back. And that's the great news that I wanted to tell you. Johann almost disappeared. That made me ever, ever so sad, for him as a person and for the music."

"We've done concerts already together. One of the best concerts ever by Faust in

Berlin [the Volksbühne] in 94 Great. With Johann Immler at his full speed, at his best. The major elements of Faust are back together again. We are back."

"If I talk on behalf of Faust as a group," he continues, "we are very touchy. We've been married 27 years now and as a group it's very difficult to accept another woman coming from the outside. Zappi is kind of hardcore. He says, 'Nobody, nobody. If we are only two of us we play the two of us, that's it.' Now Zappi himself says, 'Let's invite Steven and let's have Keiji, let's play with Chris [Culter], things like that.'

A major London concert is being planned for later this year, possibly at the Royal Festival Hall. "With Keiji, Tony [Conrad], Jim, Chris [Culter]," says Peron. "We would make a Faust feast, with a hay-blowing machine and concrete mixer and helicopters if we do get some — things like that. I like to blow fresh cut grass into the audience. It's effective for the nose. It's for the eyes and the nose. There is a message in there. I don't know what it means but it's nice to have fresh cut grass. We've done it already in Holland [in '95], the people enjoyed it, and what a feast. At the end they just jumped in the grass — there was a not man, a very friendly not. Ask Jim about that, he remembers," he says, laughing.

O'Rourke was playing with Faust at the show in question. Another incident is still indelibly etched on his mind.

"My girlfriend at the time [Sue Lloyd] was playing cello stuck at the front of the stage, and we made this big plan about how the show was going to go. She was going to have time to come off and then Zappi was going to come upfront with the chainsaws. But Zappi forgot all this, and runs up to the front of the stage with a chainsaw in the first ten fucking seconds of the concert and starts sawing away at the sheet metal."

"And she's stuck up there and then there's like this rescue crew in front holding the four legs of her chair and carrying her above the audience with the cello. And Jean's going, 'Aaaaaayyyyy!', and I'm trapped behind this bank of TVs and a synthesizer, and I couldn't move to help her out. It was a fun show! I remember Jean told her later, 'Sue, you may think we are crazy but we haven't killed anyone yet.' That's only the framework of the story of that show."

Revaluated by this recent activity, Faust have been recording in Peron's home studio with Steven Ray Lobdall.

"We have already done some new recordings. We are back in the old spirit," he enthuses. "We have an eight-track machine. I have a big house here. We have two, three hours of recording already, which you can boil down to anything you want to. We are planning to record more. We are doing it again."

"I would like very much to work regularly with Jim, because he is really a Faust musician, and magician. I think these two guys [O'Rourke and Immler], if they had the chance to work together on some Faust material, that would be quite something." □

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Composer **Les Baxter**, who died in January, was the archetypal virtual tourist. From the 50s onwards, his records offered baby boomer suburbanites the chance to explore taboo regions of illicit sex and exotic ritual, all from the comfort of their polyvinyl loungers. Appreciation by David Toop

# packaged for pleasure

Lust and terror, sultry tropical ari, Aztec spells, X-ray eyes and hot pants, sunken cities and singing sea shells; electric frogs, bustin' bongos and wild striped bilkins, jungle jazz and sacred idols, space escapades and switchblade sisters, pits, pendulums and magical bottles.

**D**escribed by Baby Boomer Collectibles magazine as "One of the [Space Age Bachelor Pad] genre's coolest cross-referential masters", Les Baxter died in Palm Springs in January. Of course, winter in Palm Springs is not like a frozen January in Europe; for Baxter — along with Martin Denny and Arthur Lyman, one of the inventors of the Exotica movement — the audio world was an environment in which a season might be suspended indefinitely. Baxter offered package tours in sound, selling tickets to sedentary tourists who wanted to stroll around some taboo emotions before lunch, view a pagan ceremony, go wild in the sun or conjure a demon, all without leaving home hi-fi comforts in the white suburbs.

How seriously Baxter — composer of the *Lossie* theme — took his role as a sonic conjurer of vicarious experience is unclear. On the sleeve of his 1970 soundtrack for *Cry Of The Banshee* he reports that one passage in the music had been known "to cause an apparition to materialise. I feel I must warn those who might have a fear of the supernatural of the possibility of such an occurrence." Back in the days when celluloid sex and horror were still softcore, titillation and unfulfilled promises were an accepted element in the selling of forbidden pleasures.

*Ports Of Pleasure*, one Les Baxter album was titled, a concentrated suggestion of exotica, nomadism, sexual offices, indulgence without commitment. Perhaps that's



my dirty mind, by contrast, the music itself was innocent, innocuous, often appealingly mediocre. But Baxter had strange, inventive ideas which could lift rustic arrangements and melodic schlock into a shining realm of warm leatherette enchantment.

**B**axter was born in Texas in 1922. Originally a saxophonist who performed in LA clubs in the 40s, he joined Mel Torme — the velvet fog — to become a Mel Torme, arranged and conducted for Nat 'King' Cole, and worked as a musical director for the Bob Hope and Abbott and Costello radio shows. Then in 1953 he set sail for uncharted lands, scoring his first film a sailboat travologue called *Tango Tiki*. As Jollo Bafra gleefully accuses in *Incredibly Strange Music Volume II*, Baxter may never have left Hollywood, though this unkind cut was not actually true. Elevator Music author Joseph Lanza portrays Baxter gazing out of a Mexican hotel window and being smitten by a blast of inspiration for *The Sacred Idol* album. "Les Baxter is a great traveller, chiefly with the object of studying the music and instruments of foreign countries," claimed the sleeve notes of *Baxter Style*. The point is not, nonetheless, since travels in hyperreality are best undertaken in a comfortable armchair.

As the name suggests, stereo hi-fidelity — a new technology then — promised the authenticity of being there, in imaginary and acoustic space, and what was cinema if not an externalised dream of unattainable experience shared in the dark with strangers? Lanza describes Baxter's *Tomb of the Inconquerable* evidence that this is a genuine imitation of a previously fabricated wilderness. So Baxter provides classic post-mod source material: when the soundtrack work devolved to virtually nothing in the early 80s he wrote music for theme parks and seaworlds, surely the ultimate PoMo job. More pungently, Lanza notes that Baxter and the other professional Exotists represented a "celebration of America's power to mould the

unknown in the image of reconstructed psychosexual fantasies of GIs who had been stationed in the islands during World War II."

Bamboo, bamboo, taboo, taboo: the words drum out a percussive sound poetry of Orientalist mystique, the incantations of strange gods, the rumble and hiss of Polynesian surf. The cover of Baxter's *Jewels Of The Sea* album lured the buyer with "stirring orchestrations for listening and loving" and a photograph of a submerged water babe, apparently naked, make-up and hair intact, jewellery not yet rusted. Satisfying similar obscure desires, the effect recalls those underwater dancers who perform in Florida tourist attractions.

The come-hither look could be found on most Martin Denny album covers, as well. Denny's *Exotica*, for example, featured model Sandy Warner opening a gap in a bamboo screen as if to say, "This is where real life begins, big boy." Denny's big hit — "Quiet Village" — had been written by Les Baxter for his own *Le Sacre Du Souvage* album on Capitol. Les also helmed the Yma Sumac legend by conducting, arranging and composing on her *Voice Of The Xtabay* and *Miracles* albums. An obvious appeal of all these artefacts of the plastic age is their brazen yet naive exploitation factor. For a while, Baxter was the king of exploitation, scoring for a mixed bag of Western, sci-fi, sword 'n' sandal, horror, biker, dragster, surf and beach-blanket films, particularly at American International Pictures. *The Raven*, *Pir And The Pendulum*, *House Of Usher*, *X — The Man With X-Ray Eyes*, *Tales Of Terror*, *The Young Racers*, *Beach Blanket Bingo*, *How To Stuff A Wild Bikini*, *Black Sabbath*, *Dr Goldfoot And The Bikini Machine*, *Savage Sisters*, *Wild In The Streets*, *Heidi's Belles* and other 'classic' B-movies. He also worked extensively in TV, if *Baywatch* had been prime-time 35 years ago, Les would have got the call.

In the true spirit of exploitation, a film score would take two weeks at the most. Eventually, Baxter began to lose track of his own music. "Offhand I don't recall working on *Worms Five* or *Premature Burial*," he told *Soundtrack* magazine in 1981, "although the studio sometimes used my left-over cues or took my cues illicitly from other pictures. I don't think I worked on *Sons Of The Slave Queen*, but if you watch the film you can hear practically half the music from *Goliath And The Barbarians*. Actually, some of the titles in my filmography are things I could never dream of scoring — *Dognor's Hot Pants, Inc.* — What on earth's that?"

One might reasonably imagine that a master of exploitation would know the answer to that question. "I never turn anything down," he admitted, heroically, to *Soundtrack*, but hot pants must have transgressed a final frontier of taste. By the early 80s he had converted, or rationalised, what some might consider a career decline into something positive, claiming that the lack of film work allowed him more time for serious composing. The serious thing had always been implicit, if not overt.

*The Passions*, his collaboration with vocalist Bas Sheva ("A voice whose vivid colorations range from the guttural snarl of savagery to a delicate and lyrical beauty") and percussionist Sabu, may have been described as "a HIGH FIDELITY adventure" on the front cover, but in the liner notes Baxter went to great lengths to elucidate the technicalities of his arrangements and instrumentation, the nature of the sound balance and other, doubtless masculine points of serious interest in a "high fidelity critique." The album was described as "a picture of women's passion", but the subtext surely stroked ruffled male egos. A failure to understand women could be amply compensated by a den equipped with a good hi-fi system.

Despite the kitsch, Baxter was an ardent experimentalist. He used Moog, percussion and orchestral textures to unusual effect and for his swampy *Frogs* score, composed in 1972, he combined electronically treated frog vocalisations with his own synthesizer playing. Having stacked up heavenly credits for more than five decades of synthetic paradise depictions, Les Baxter is now experiencing the real thing. *Lost Episodes*, a record of rare Les Baxter material, has just been released by Donyus Records, PO Box 1975, Burbank, CA 91507, USA. Baxter's recording of "Sunken City" is included on David Toop's *Ocean Of Sound* compilation (through Virgin).



# invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of...

## Mixmaster Morris

Tested by Mike Barnes

Mixmaster Morris was born in Lincolnshire in 1961. In the early 70s his interest in alternative culture was awakened by borrowing Timothy Leary's *The Politics Of Ecstasy* from the school library in 1977 he formed a punk group and ran away from school to follow The Clash on tour. He worked for a year at the Lincolnshire indie label Company Records, and began giving electronic music performances as The Rhythm Method. While working as a systems analyst for the GLC in 1985, he started presenting an eclectic radio show, *The Mongolian Hip-Hop Show*, on the London pirate station Network 21. In the late 80s he started recording as The Irresistible Force, and began a DJ residency at the chill-out room in London's Heaven club. In 1989 he was invited by The Shamen to DJ on their Synergy tour, staying with the group for two years. Since then Morris has been DJing worldwide, acting as a tireless proselytizer for Ambient music while zealously expanding standard definitions of the genre. In 1992 he released his first solo album, *Flying High*. Subsequent releases have included two volumes of *Dream Fish*, a collaboration with Pete Namlook, and 1994's *Global Chalice*. The Jukebox took place in Morris's flat in Cambwell, South London.

### COLD CUT

Extract from *Journeys By DJ (DJ DJ)*

It's the man Matt [Black] Is this off the mix CD? You know how I'm connected with Coldcut — we used to be on the same pirate station [Network 21] in the mid-80s. As soon as I met them I found out what an amazing record collection they had. Matt and John [Hoyle] were the first people with perfect tempo I've ever met. Matt sat around here and I played him some tracks and he said, 'I'd like [them], right?' That amazed me. I could do that now, but ten years ago I would have thought that was impossible. In a lot of ways [Coldcut] are as responsible for the breakdown in law and order in music as much as anybody.

They were the first British DJs to say, 'Well, let them arrest us, let's just do it.' They told me that when they went and did [their first sampling single] "Say Kids What Time Is It?" They were sat outside in the car and thought, 'The police will be in there and we'll be arrested, they'll say, "This isn't your music, come along, Sonny".' The thing we had in common was that we were listening to all those Stenski records from New York and thinking, 'Hmmm, this is very interesting.' I went to see them play at the Fridge in '85, when they played the test pressing of 'Hey Kids' and everyone went totally wild. I thought, 'That's it, that's the future of music.'

**What kind of stuff were you doing on**

### Network 21?

I used to do a show called *The Mongolian Hip-Hop Show*. The first thing [I played] was an old Nonesuch Mongolian vocal record over a Run DMC B-side. Ten years later I'm still doing mixes like that. It's a parallel to the sampling aesthetic, because all music is data and it all has an equivalence. It's certainly of value to use the most eclectic source material.

### How do you approach DJing now?

Put one record on, then you put another one on. Sometimes you put two on at the same time. [Laughs] Yes, but I spoke to someone recently who tried it and made a mess of it. He should go far. You see a lot of

allegedly professional DJs, and the whole experience is so vacuous. Too many DJs have little choice over what they play. It's very bad for the thing the DJ now that all the staff of all the major labels are trying to be DJs. It's their job to play all the label's releases and that's what's making the DJs so boring. I like DJs that go out and find records that you haven't heard before. There's still plenty of them, they're just being squeezed out by the industry-appointed ones. I'm also glad that DJs are going more left than I am, like Bruce Gilbert. It used to be my obsession to be leftmost goalpost and I'm happy to be relieved of that responsibility now.

## STEVE REICH

### *Music For Pieces Of Wood*

(Hungaroton)

(Immediately) It's great. *Music For Pieces Of Wood* I love it. I can probably tell you recording this is. I can't actually tell you that it's not Nexus?

**No, it's a Hungarian recording.**

[Goes to CD rack] I have this one as well, probably Group 180?

**No, it's by Anadolu Percussion Group.**

Not even the same group, haven't got that one. You knew I'd know this one, because this was a piece that changed my life. I somehow get a feeling that Reich has lost the plot, because in these days he was playing music where all you needed to do was clasp your hands and bang bits of wood together. And now you need four articulated trucks full of video screens and computers. Somehow minimalism seems to have got lost along the way

**Obviously you're referring to *The Cave*.**

**Did you go and see it performed?**

No, I bailed out. Before that I bailed out around the time that he did the concert at the Proms [where Morris first heard this piece in 84]. He did his lecture and basically said, 'OK I've done minimalism, I want to do something else. If anyone wants to take it over, you're welcome to it, it's all yours.' And I say stay at the time, I felt that was a personal mandate [Laughs].

At Heaven I used to play Reich's *Music For 18 Musicians*, and that takes an hour, which would give me time to set up all the rest of the kit. I would like to play *Music For Pieces Of Wood* one day with a group, because it must be a very exacting concentration that's needed. You can see the sweat on their foreheads when they think, 'I am coming in on three, aren't I?' It must be very satisfying to do it right. As soon as you play that sort of music you just go into a trance, suspend your normal consciousness. A part of the brain that you normally don't use seems to be in charge. It's like trance-dancing for your fingers

**Why did seeing this piece performed change your life? I heard it was because you saw that music could be made out of virtually nothing: just banging bits of wood together.**

Well I knew that, but you would usually expect electronics to do it. Lots of things around the time of '85 were showing that less is more in terms of equipment: the guys in Derot didn't have a studio full of Fairlights, they had broken old 303s and 909s, and there was only one

of each and they were doing the rounds. You were once quoted as saying that the early Acid House rhythms patterns were similar to Reich's.

Er... probably, words to that effect. Some of the Acid records run three over four, or five over four, especially Larry Heard running two different time signatures over each other, and you're just listening to where the downbeat is changing. The bassline is going on a different metre to the rest of the track. People do understand this as a Techno precursor now, even though it isn't electronic. The additive process, by which it's built up, is a parallel to the way people naturally write sequences, which is four bars, add in the four bars later, add in that. Drumming is the closest relative to that one

I think you have to love [the] music to play it. That's why Nexus are so good, as most of them are in his [Reich's] band. They mix his stuff up with other stuff and put it in its historical context. They do Reich's stuff and then follow it with people like George Hamilton Green, who was a novelty xylophone player in the 30s. He was one of the top five recording artists in the world, he used to sell millions of 78s. But the whole concept of novelty xylophone has disappeared. Instead of having Yngwie Malmsteen or John McLaughlin, they had people who played xylophones very fast.

## THE SHAMEN

### "Move Any Mountain (Live!)" from "Heal (The Separation)" CD single (One Little Indian)

(Immediately) Oh, no. I never wanted to hear that riff again in my life, actually! You're going to ask me to identify which riff this is, are you? Very live sounding piece. This is one of the hardest tracks to identify the mixes of, because there were 34 mixes or something. [Vocals come in] Good grief, is this live? Recently?

It was recorded at the Forum in December last year.

I knew I wasn't in there, anyway I used to come out and play this one on the live tours. By the end of the Synergy gigs there would always be seven people playing at once, total mayhem going on, which is what made those gigs very exciting. Always different every night, unpredictable. Then it just became a big pop show on the road, with no risks being taken, and I wasn't really interested in it.

## When did you stop working with them?

When [the late] Will Schnitt stopped working with them. My attitude to The Shamen goes up and down depending on whether or not I've heard the music recently. I can't say I really love what they're doing, but I love what they were trying to do. It was a very important time for me, because it got me traveling around Britain I think it blew a lot of people's minds, the Synergy show, in the remote places they went to. I did 120 gigs with The Shamen over two years and really got used to life in a mini-bus

**At the time of Synergy, The Shamen seemed like they were going to be in the vanguard of an important rock/Technotron crossover.**

It was an important period and was exactly the same period that all the Manchester stuff was going on. When we were doing the Synergy gigs, there were always bands in the audience like Jesus Jones, EMF, Happy Mondays. We started a residency at the Town And Country Club and it was the hottest ticket in town for a few months, and then we took it all on the road. We tried to do some chill-out rooms, but not many, because no one could understand why we needed another room with yet another sound system.

**You seemed to share a common psychedelic vision with The Shamen, with an almost rigorous attitude to drug taking.** Rigorous? Vigorous, do you mean? I don't think you'd name a band The Shamen by accident. Colin [Angus] has always had such a single-minded psychedelic agenda, it's as single-minded as Sun Ra, and he kept plugging away at it, which I liked. I don't see where it is now if they've diluted the music to get the message across, I don't know what the message is anymore.

## PLUG 2

### "Cheesy (Pic 'N' Mix)" from "Rebuild Kor" EP (Rising High)

(Immediately starts singing along) Love that amplitude modulation. I know the track off by heart, but I'm bugged off I can remember the title

**It's "Cheesy" by Plug 2 [Luke Vibert, aka Wagon Christ].**

Cheesy listening. These records would have sold more if they'd actually been available, because *Rising High* went down between Plug 2 and Plug 3. To me those are the definitive 'Fungle'

records, which to me is the bastard son of Jungle, sort of Jungle and mushrooms. And [Luke] is a fun guy to be with. Luke used to be a drummer — I mean are you surprised? Jonah [Sharp] is a drummer. You can hear it in the programming.

One thing about Wagon Christ — I've never recognised a sample on one of his records, which is pretty rare because I usually recognise the samples. He must be sampling something so fucking obscure. *Throbbing Pouch* has been a huge album over the past year. One of the things that really warms me to the idea of Trip Hop — Ambient gives you an excuse for playing all sorts of weird music of one sort. Trip Hop does the same for a whole other file of music, where you don't have to justify it anymore. It's like World Music or Acid Jazz, everyone knows they're marketing terms, but they allow the sale of a lot of non-mainstream music. Which I think is a good thing.

**I've heard that your preference in drum 'n' bass is for "non-sense" tracks.**

Of course. The marginalia, that's always where all the interesting stuff is. Throughout the Techno period, 89/90/91/92, you were getting all these amazing records coming out and nobody playing them because the DJs were just looking for the hardest/fastest/lowest/dullest/ugliest at most parties. I was always looking for the strangest, weirdest, most original, most brilliant music, not just the most number of clichés you can pack into a record.

**Are you going to start making your own drum 'n' bass tracks?**

I've been doing a track with Jonah this week. That's what I've got to go back to after this [Laughs]. And I'm doing some stuff for T Power. When I do it, I don't want to do something that sounds like Good Looking or Metalheadz, I want to go considerably further out.

## YOUNG GODS

### "Salomon Song" from *The Young Gods Play Kurt Weill (Play It Again Sam)*

An, 'Salomon Song', with different music. I used to sing this I did a translation of the song. I was going to do a Brecht album and I still plan to do it. *Rising High* warned me to do it. It never happened. I was a Brecht maniac, which is what started me going to Germany in the mid 80s, to buy Eisler records and get sheet music as well.

*Continued on page 65*

# charts

## Sprawl 15

**Sonic Youth** — The Sprawl (Blast First)  
**Witchman** — The Shape Of Rage (Leaf)  
**DJ Krush** — Meso (M2 Wax)  
**Arvo Pärt** — Tabula Rasa (ECM New Series)  
**Rachmaninov** — Liturgy Of St John Chrysostom (Melody)

**Trawl** — Trawl EP (Sennar)  
**Howard Shore** — Dead Ringers OST (Silva Screen)  
**Jacob's Optical Stairway** — Solar Feelings (Kyoto Mix) (RBS)

**Override** — Override EP (Octopus)  
**Wim Mertens** — The Belly Of An Architect OST (Les Oiseaux Du Crepuscule)

**T Power/MK Ultra** — Claustrophobic Killers (white)  
**Various** — True People (React)  
**4 Hero** — Mr Kirk's Nightmare (Reinforced)  
**Cheb Khaled** — N'ssi N'ssi (Mango)  
**Jon Hassell/Farafina** — Flash Of The Spirit (Imajin)

Compiled by *Mr. and Douglas*. *The Sprawl* last Thursday of every month at Cafe Internet, London.

## 15 Tentacles

**Autecore** — Tri Repetae (Warp)  
**Björnstad/Darling/Rydel/Christensen** — The Sea (ECM)  
**Görecki** — Kleines Requiem Für Eine Polka (Nonesuch)  
**Hedfunk** — Hedfunk (Shadow)  
**Holger Hiller** — Little Present (Muz Bank)  
**Koch/Schütz/Stauder** — Hardcore Chambermusic (Intakt)  
**LFO** — Advance (Warp)  
**M** — Selfless/Napoleon (Palace/Lo-Ri)  
**Didier Malherbe/Loy Béth** — Hébouk (Tangram)  
**Mister Bungle** — Oscar Volante (Warner)  
**Movietone** — Howerton (Planet)  
**Sandoz** — Every Man Got Dreaming (Touch)  
**Henry Threadgill** — Makin' A Move (Columbia)  
**Tortoise** — Millions Now Living Will Never Die (City Song)  
**Various** — Vals 1: Destruction Of Syntax (Subharmonic)

Compiled by Philippe Drouot, Octopus magazine, Paris, France

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

## Spacer

**Various** — Desert Blues: Ambiances Du Sahara (Network)  
**Noise-Maker's Fifes** — Soundscapes Of The Inner Eye (NMT)  
**Bed Snapper** — Mocking EP (Remixes) (Warp)  
**Coll** — Black Light District (Eskaton)  
**Blue Cheer** — Live And Unreleased 68-74 (Captain Tripi)  
**Alec Empire** — Hypermodern Jazz 2000-5 (Mille Plateaux)  
**Various** — Afropea 3 Telling Stories To The Sea (Luska Bop)  
**New And Used** — Consensus (Knitting Factory Works)  
**Witchman** — The Shape Of Rage (Leaf)  
**HIM** — HIM (Southern)

Compiled by The Wire Sound System

## Latin Progressive 12

**Grupo Folklórico y Experimental Nuevayorquino** — Concepts In Unity (Salsoul)  
**Willie Colon** — The Good, The Bad, The Ugly (Fania)  
**Eddie Palmieri** — Sentido (Coco)  
**Hermeto Pascoal** — Hermeto (Muse)  
**Larry Harlow** — Hommy (Fania)  
**Corrjo** — Time Machine (Coco)  
**Raices** — Raices (Nemperor)  
**Paulinho Da Costa** — Agora (Palo Alto)  
**Ricardo Marro** — Time (Vaya)  
**Dom Um Romão** — Dom Um Romão (Muse)  
**Radu De Souza** — Colours (Milestone)  
**Egberto Gismonti** — No Capira (Kamera)

Compiled by The Montuno Section

## More Dodgy Group Names

**Bovine Over Sussex**  
**Mangled Citt**  
**Bestial Warhurst**  
**Cradle Of Fifth**  
**Young Farmers Claim Future**  
**Christibalt**  
**Christdrifter**  
**Gore Beyond Necropsy**  
**Man Is The Bastard**  
**Spazz**  
**Answer Me!**  
**IAM Umbrella**

All genuine group names compiled by The Trowler

## The Office Ambience

**Stereolab** — Emperor Tomato Ketchup (Duchophonic)  
**L7 Bremen** — Logical Progression (Good Looking)  
**Various** — In Memoriam Gilles Deleuze (Mille Plateaux)  
**Les Baxter** — The Lost Episodes (Dionysus)



DJ Krush

# sound check

## In this month's review section:

**B12** • Bazooka • Being  
Paul Bowles • James Carter • Thomas Chapin  
*Classic Acid* • Einstürzende Neubauten • Fourth World  
Fushitsusha • Charles Gayle • Bruce Gilbert  
Keiji Haino • Peter Hammill  
Larry Heard • Henry Cow  
Hotel X • Howie B • IAM  
Umbrella • Iceberg Slim  
Illusion Of Safety • Jalal Thomas Koner • Robert Marcel Lepage • Tony Levin • Main • Roy Montgomery • Butch Morris • Moroccan Trance II • Nuyorican • Abiodun Oyewele • William Parker  
The Pharcyde • Courtney Pine • Iggy Pop • Pressure Of Speech • Ro To • Run On • Nicholas Sackman  
Pharoah Sanders • Robyn Schulkowsky • David Shea • Stereolab • Tek 9  
Temps Perdu? • Trans Am  
Ui • Unknown Public  
Whore • Frank Zappa  
soviet\*france: • **Plus: critical beats and outer limits in brief**

### **B12**

Time Tourist  
MARP 37 CD

### **Ro To**

Ro To  
SOURCE 90821 CD

### **Being**

Selected Transmissions/Point Two  
SABRES OF PARADISE 9606 2CD

Now that the digitized rhythmic thackets and root-system baselines of Jungle have supposedly supplanted the space-age nostalgia of Intelligent Techno as everyone's future-music of choice, what is to become of those bedroom-bound electro-bores who have yet to genuflect before the towering altar of breakbeat culture? Do we write them off automatically for failing to drag their chosen form of musical expression into the wastebasket of their Alan hard drive? Or do we accept that the passage from one moment of cultural innovation to another is rarely so neat and linear, that there is a point where 'established' practices are stacked horizontally with 'new' developments in a complex, inter-dependent lattice that refuses to lend itself to soundbyte analysis?

For the most part, these three records of cool Euro-Techno ignore recent developments in post-dance dance music (I know, I know, but have you got a better generic shorthand for all this post-Electro/phuture/techno/drum 'n' bass/Trance/techno/digjazz stuff?) Which is OK if the music is any good, not so good if it merely reprises the innovations of those early Trans Am 12's (the stone tablets of Techno), or, much more relevant, the melancholy machine music of Carl Craig's 1990 "Psyche" EP.

The music on Time Tourist doesn't sound much different to that which appeared on B12's *Electro-Soma* album of three years ago: the synth chords still arch in sad parabolas over discreet rhythm tracks, and the melodies still describe a yearning to escape to the solace of imagined futures and other worlds. But I don't care. I'm a sucker for this kind of stuff, and were I a DJ, would willingly programme it alongside such



supposedly more devastating instances of future shock as Spacer and Witchman (which probably explains why I'm not a DJ).

At least two of the tracks on Ro To (or is it 20 by Ro?) Hard to tell from the sleeve, whose image riff on the auto-eroticism of the sea-car-death equation — no, seriously! — have been touched by recent developments in post-T electronic music. "Gig" attempts to reproduce the sensation of out-of-control electricity and hardcore-under-foot familiar from the recordings of Mike Paradas and Richard James (but Roman Flugel, aka Ro To, has overlooked the fact that the most crucial element in the music of both Paradas and James is the urge to distort), while "Visible Speech" is hypermodern jazz 2000.5 (to tick the title of the new Alec Empire CD). Otherwise, we're transported back in

time to the first *Artificial Intelligence* compilation I quite like this actually

I have a few more problems with the music of Being, which noodles away in a vague area between Ambient and Intelligent Techno for what seems like an eternity. Here's where my argument looks like it's going to fall flat. Except the point here is that I would have fingered this music for being bereft of ideas and inspiration in 1992/93, the heyday of Intelligent Techno, let alone 1996.

TONY HERRINGTON

### **Bazooka**

Cigars, Oysters & Booze  
SST RECORDS SST 325 CD

### **Hotel X**

Ladders  
SST RECORDS SST 117 CD

Punkjazz: you play drums, I get a sax, we like Ornette and Hendrix, let's get out there and do it! Resolve to play funky, raunchy, free and loud in the face of postmodern inertia and boredom. Like Shockblast, both groups here benefit from a desire to be the most exciting bar band on the planet, no sheltering in tedious, bourgeois art-spaces. This supplies a punk integrity lacking in academic attempts to bring jazz and rock together. Bazooka have a song called "In Defence Of Phallic Power Totems", but are devoid of the below-brow coarseness that flaws, for example, The Molecules (a Berkeley equivalent). A likeable version of Xero Stingsby, Bazooka could learn from the punk succinctness, but are certainly a refreshing antidote to East Coast downtown posers.

Hotel X's John Kiefer should stick to guitar rather than sax, as an ear for Dolphy and Coltrane is rare in rocket mayhem, and his guitar peaks reach

## soundcheck

**Paul Bowles**  
Baptism Of Solitude  
MCA MTA 9501 CD

**Iceberg Slim**  
Reflections

INFINITE ZEPHYRUS 74321 29985 CD

Hail the rediscovery and replotting of spoken word: a thousand tongues set free, be it the police siren apprehensions of Lydia Lunch, the quirked buildover border patrols of Henry Rollins, or countessential refugee gloses out of the mouths of venerable sages (Burroughs, Ginsberg et al) from another time and place (or the Future) language taken up and warped in an intimate embrace with cryptic flows of electricity.

Trying to write about Paul Bowles is like trying to describe an arrow. Trying to write like Paul Bowles would be like trying to imitate a snake moving through sand. In the neat, orderly, uncanny, temtifying prose/poetry he has bequeathed the 20th century, there seems to be no "trying to write" in the way Bowles writes. And hearing his singular delivery — like that of one-time close Tangiers neighbour, Bill Burroughs — only enhances what you already feel about his work.

"There is a terrible garrulousness in most American writing," wrote Gore Vidal, "a legacy up about the Old Frontier." "Perhaps because he sought out new frontiers, all around the world, Bowles's language is not of this type. It is a writing stripped of all excess and gush — sometimes hardly recognisable as a 'personal' voice (at all, increasingly, he's 'had' behind his translators of other (mainly Moroccan) authors, and this immersion in the collective Voice of tell-tale Tales and Parables has rubbed off on his own voice (be it fiction, poetry or travel writing). Given this deepening interest in oral traditions, and his interlacement of aye-aye lines between spoken and written, *Baptism Of Solitude* — Bowles reading a selection of his own work, set among a wide-screen *Ambient* backdrop sculpted by Bill Laswell — seems like a timely project.

Given also — if I think — that the new *Ambient/Electronics* hasn't taken up the possibilities offered by a merger with spoken word nearly enough, Laswell is to be hosesmmed for his subtle work on *Baptism Of Solitude*. "Next To Nothing" here, for instance, is one of the most moving, haunting things I have heard for an age: poignant like a distant bell tolling the death of love. Laswell's veils of mood manipulation are never an obtrusive presence, as Bowles ghosts through the waystations of his life.

"There were no familiar objects along the way, there was no ground below nor sky above, yet the space was full of things." That describes the any drama of this CD very well. It is as if all the impediments of narrative construction were now seen by Bowles to be a useless detour and so the strange thoughts he used to put into the heads of fictional characters (who were already and anyway barely disguised versions of himself, his wife, his friends) he now sets straight down, unimpeded, in a desolate, uncanny shorthand.

Laswell is also — at a more bureaucratic level, with his Archivists Hat

on — in the residue of the Iceberg Slim (given name: Robert Beck) LP, *Reflections* is an artefact from a gone dead time, where Bowles's voice/vocab is stern, asocial, dry, the Iceberg Slim voice is a strung-out fruit of the American Street, bitter, obscene, slangy, garrulous. But his characters are locked into keening loops just like Bowles's lonely existentialist hunters. The surface chatter may be all his's and spikes, but the portents here are bible black and starkish.

On the cover of *Reflections* the Iceman is arranged by a liberal-minded snapper atop a micro plateau of iceblocks, but his icy man is really an impenetrable white powder cool dating back to a time when Cool was a magickal amulet brandished against a brutal world. This is one of the reasons that the Iceberg Slim oeuvre (books and record) — has long been revered by rappers and rap fans, not only for the good aesthetic reason that he was way ahead in his amble-take on city strife, but because his whole mythos feels just as pertinent in Huron City '96. These four unwholesome but wholly holy reflections tell a different story than a narrative admiration — the zebra-stripe hatband catalogue of whores and pimps, bitches and 'fames; players and punters, dealers and DOAs — might supply.

On first hearing, Slim's singing evocation imparts a feeling that his whole Cool manner/manner may be just a prairie-nail dog too easy for him to do: but it's partly a honeyed way into staking out a shady, shades-on version of Westland-topography: "The King of them all had started his fall." "This track [the Fall] is about having to take a fall and go to jail because of sexual betrayal, but the real fall here is wider and deeper — So down I fell to the depths of hell/For I put myself on a cross[and] everything I had was lost." His message concerns how the mably liberating street-theology of Cool may have begun as a self-glorifying survival tactic but often delivers the coke down into a cold, cold hell where all connections to humanity are lost among the dust of addiction, betrayal, race selfout.

On these two releases, the world is redrawn in colours of desire, mapped out through a fog of personal iconography rather than divided along conventional geopolitical lines. There's a lot of history here — replotted, refigured into a (confusion of histories.

IAN PENMAN



Paul Bowles

Soft/Mothers heights. The sax-dominated tracks are a little ho-hum. As a label, SST seem to be coasting here, seeking the past glories of Saccharine Trust and Universal Congress Of Joe Bata (guests with Bazzooka), rather than new fare. Time they signed Pinko Zoo and inject something truly magnificent into the hammondi-funk-jazz-punk interface.

**BEN WATSON**

**James Carter**  
The Real Queststorm  
ATLANTIC JAZZ 82742 CD

Jazz is a music predicated on excitement, on rapid thinking and fast execution. Certainly it's axiomatic for young saxophonists to make it this way. Queststorm by 26 year old James Carter denies that assumption — without at all fitting into a 'cool' idiom either. It's a

ballad album that, as the title suggests, expresses intensity and even storms of emotion mostly within the confines of a slow tempo.

Tenor players from the swing to bebop era of the 1940s — Chu Berry and Don Byas — aren't the models one expects for a young sax player in a scene still in thrall to John Coltrane. But that's just the tonal basis — it's found in avant gardist Frank Lowe also — and Carter's bluesy,

fragmented lines are no throwback. The constant change of horn — a different member of the saxophone, clarinet or flute family almost for every track — may be distracting, but Carter is no mere showman. The extraordinary, pent-up, sometimes explosive feel to the playing, especially on alto and tenor, is all his own.

A varying but impressive line-up mostly features Craig Taborn on piano and Dave Holland on bass. The

programme is eclectic. Some tracks have a pleasingly old-fashioned air — the slapped bass on '1944 Stomp', which is up-tempo, and the swing feel on Duke Ellington's 'The Stevedore's Serenade'. In contrast to David Murray, Carter's approach here is refreshing, not ribald. The original 'The Intimacy Of My Woman's Beautiful Eyes' is beautiful (and avoids the mistake of using her name). Carter has more originality than leader-of-the-pack Joshua Redman, and on his third album, the promise, like the tone, is immense.

ANDY HAMILTON

### Einstürzende Neubauten

Faustmusik  
Mute 050 120 CD

In October 1994, Werner Schwab's stage play *Faust* (En Bruxelles: Men Helm (Faust: My Thorax My Helmet)) was premiered at the Hans Otto Theater in Potsdam, accompanied by music especially written for the production by Einstürzende Neubauten. The Faust legend, you'll probably remember, concerns a crusty old scholar who enters a pact with the Devil's emissary, Mephisto (who was played in the Potsdam production by EN's Blok Bargeld). In exchange for his soul, Faust is offered the time of his life: time travel, youth regained, the promise of various pleasures of the flesh, and so on. Inevitably, things turn nasty in the end when Mephisto comes to claim Faust's soul.

Anyway, Neubauten came up with the ingenious idea of literally building their musical contribution into the play's *mise-en-scène*. Thus, the set for Faust's study consisted of musical instruments (guitar, bass, kohlrabi, etc) constructed out of tables, chairs and blocks. Even the sound of page-turning was amplified. Not having the visuals to contextualise the spoken word and music is a major drawback for any CD version of a theatre production. A video release would at least have brought the viewer/listener closer to the original stage conception, in particular, the inseparable relationship between music and *mise-en-scène* that Neubauten had carefully constructed. As presented here, *Faustmusik* sounds like a lifeless radio play — a series of monologues (in German) interspersed by spartan, largely percussive musical interludes, which will probably try the patience of all but the

most dedicated of Neubauten devotees.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

### Eyeless In Gaza

Bitter Apples  
A-Scale 020 CD

Bitter Apples is new material from singer/guitarist Planyn Bates and drummer Pete Becker. Apart from a hiatus between 1987 and 92, the duo has released a steady stream of records since 1980 — many on the Cherry Red label — and have collaborated with Derek Jarman, Simon Fisher Turner and poet Anne Clark. In theory I guess it's interesting that Bates wants to marry up jangly folk-rock with the deserted, groaning landscapes of isolationism. In practice I find the music almost unbearable — a peculiarly English form of après-Steeleye Span torture.

And I like Steeleye Span — I even like Bates's singing; his high-pitched inde-whining take on David Sylvian's breathy meanderings. It's the bloody music itself, the relentless strumming of those suspended chords that folk guitarists love so much, laid across lumbering rhythms, the rhetorical chord sequences drenched in a plastic mix of cheap reverb. Did I mention the lyrics? "Such a crazy machination that our crazed imaginations thirst and look for truths, clutch at truths that butterfly around?" Is this a good lyric? You decide.

The best track is a secret one hidden at the end of the CD: an old, faded recording of an extremely melancholy accordion. And the brief 'Sorrow Came' is an Ambient instrumental that recalls Bates's eerie collaboration with MU Hams, *Murder Ballads* (Delt). Now that was a record — four chilling blasts of isolationism, with Bates's voice floating by like the wind blowing over the grave of Pretty Polly, murdered by her fiance on the eve of her wedding.

CLIVE BELL

### Fourth World

Encounters Of The Fourth World  
earmilk 020 CD

Up front I have to admit my antipathy to Afro-Brazilian music. All that rhythmic complexity should be exciting, and it's a genre which has modified the course of jazz at least twice in the last 35 years, but it doesn't move my corner of the earth

Anto Moreira and Rora Purim came to prominence in the early '70s, when the mainstream of popular music (rock and jazz) was blood-chillingly bland, when smooth jazz and soft rock allied themselves in soft option fusion, and promising musicians like George Benson were reneging on the promises and plotting atrocities like 'Superstition'. So there's guilt by association, but Anto was not blameless himself. Implicated in the influential but enormously overrated *Bitches Brew* group, and its equally influential and overrated progeny, *Weather Report* and *Return To Forever*, he was personally culpable on other counts. 'Paroma' comes stubbornly to mind as an example to us all.

I've often elected to watch paint dry rather than listen to this sort of stuff. It's therefore some kind of skewed tribute that I played straight through all 57 minutes of this release without distress. Moreira is an accomplished drummer, and the group can move into the groove convincingly enough.

Encounters, recorded at the end of (the laughably named) Fourth World's 1995 European tour, is a CD accompaniment to their recent stint at London's Ronnie Scott's, where the audience was no doubt woful over its appreciation, and where the CD's best track was made. Bright and extrovert, it'll make you swing your pants. What more could you ask?

BARRY WITHERDEN

### Fushitsusha

Purple Trap, Live In London 1995  
BLAST FIRST BFP 124 2CD

### Keiji Haino

Love At Disobey (Saying I Love You, I Continue To Curse Myself) London 1994  
BLAST FIRST BFP 109 CD

Keiji Haino is an unheard-of phenomenon — an innovative, improving musician with convincing charisma and sex appeal: waist length jet black hair, wraparound shades and a nervous gestic strut. Typically, these CDs are packaged with a similar taste for self-crafting mystique — moody black or purple CD covers with enigmatic inscriptions like 'The wound that was given birth to must be bigger than the wound that gave birth'.

Fushitsusha are the manic minimalist rock trio Haino runs when he's not performing solo guitar concerts-of-cruelty, doing perverse recordings with an amplified hurdy gurdy, or weaving electric spook-spoxes with Nijumu.

Here they're caught at the distinctly uneclectic Canterbury Arms in Brixton: definitely not for the mild at heart. Fushitsusha torture any semblance of rock riffs into abstract brands of psychic masochism. The opening track, ironically titled 'Allurement', sets off typically with toe-trembling bass feedback by Haino's monumental guitar feedback. Five minutes in and eldritch vocals are added to the densely cascading mix: is Haino screeching Japanese cooing or some kind of delightful young gibberish? Fushitsusha, despite their mock-rock format, manage here to sustain a continually inventive edge of suspense throughout the hour and half set. Midway through they switch to an almost lyrical smooth jazz with Haino's guitar driving from one feedback high pitch to the next in plaintive slow motion. The track's titled 'Beauty So Great That One Can Sigh Go Insane'.

And if you think that's something, wait till you get the man on his own. Solo, live at London's Disobey club, Haino escapes any remnant of grandiose group posturing. The first of the CD's two tracks is 43 minutes of improved guitar unpredictability. Whenever you might be musically when you start listening to this, by the close, beyond the ear-basher-barmer, beyond even the nose bordon-barmer, you'll be somewhere else. Haino at times so creatively resourceful he manages to evoke both the bedlam of technological nightmare (hints of the film *Telex*) and the primal roarings of nature. An unholy industrial on faces into a baroque lycosm in which he wrenches church organ notes from the massed feedback. If this is minimalism, it's minimalism with body — at times agonised at times euphoric, almost always madly sensual.

ROBERT CLARK

### Charles Gayle

Testaments  
KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW 114 CD

Thomas Chapin  
Management Dreams  
KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW 167 CD

Contrasting releases from Knitting Factory, label of the downtown New

# soundcheck

York venue. Multi-instrumentalist Thomas Chapin is a slightly schizophrenic figure. His more 'inside' persona was featured recently on *You Don't Know Me on Arbesque*. Here he returns, for his fourth release on Knitting Factory Works, with some more free-wheeling playing, marked by a piano-less line-up with Mano Pavone (bass) and Michael Sann (drums). Chapin's forceful, slashing lines and acerbic tone on alto dominate. Unusually, in addition to banjo, sax and flute, he also features mezzo-soprano sax (hard to distinguish from an alto, it's probably that hybrid, nasal sound which appears on "Pognant Dream", one of the more melodic tracks. Poet Vernon Frazer, and someone called John Zorn, are featured on a couple of tracks. According to the press release, Zorn is so popular there's "a league of people who buy everything he is on", which must be why he's here. The league should realise the sax playing on *Menogene Dreams* is almost all Chapin, and very striking too.

Chapin is too zany to be a fully paid-up free jazzer. Charles Gayle, in contrast, is a deeply serious and probably unsung disciple of Albert Ayler and late John Coltrane. Though he's worked with and been championed by contemporary icons such as Henry Rollins and Thurston Moore, he's really a figure from the 60s New Thing, keeping the flame alive in the 90s. It may not be right to say he's an Ayler disciple because, born three years after Albert in 1939, he's actually a contemporary — easy to forget given his late rise to prominence. Though associated with the free scene, he seems not to have recorded till 1988, and scraped a living from busking because he couldn't get gigs.

His classic and still not superseded statement was *Touchin' On Trane* on PMP with William Parker and Rashid Ali. With colleagues like those, that album is likely to retain the edge over *Testaments*, but David Murray associate Wilber Morris on bass and long-time Gayle sideman Michael Wimberly on drums are scarcely less impressive. By coincidence it's also Charles Gayle's fourth album for Knitting Factory, appropriately live with the audience erging on.

The title track begins slow and dirge-like with some very Ayler-ish melodic figures, and maybe a paraphrase of "Ghosts". But Gayle can't stay long at a

slow tempo — or rather, low energy-level. Maybe his tone can come across as committed or hedging depending on your mood, but there's no doubt the playing is masterful and the energy overwhelming. All the tracks have religious titles, with quotes from the Psalms on the sleeve. "Christ's Suffering" is pretty explicit, and here Gayle offers more slow-moving lines than usual, with Ayler's hallmark wide, sentimental vibrato. Gayle's sub-Cecil Taylor piano playing seems to be a fairly recent development — clearly not something he could indulge as a street musician — and "Parables" is piano throughout. The traditional "Lambs A' Crying" features bass clarinet.



Testaments is certainly the work of a giant among contemporary jazz masters. Like Coltrane's free jazz classic *Ascension*, when played at full volume it's powerful enough to heat up the apartment on a cold day — and so certainly welcome up here in the freezing North.

ANDY HAMILTON

## Bruce Gilbert

Ab Ovo

Mute 5M0117 CD

## Bruce Gilbert

Ovo Mix

Mute 12MUTE132 12"

## Lewis/Gilbert & Mills

Pacific/Specific (In A Different Place)

who 3CD

Ab Ovo (a truncation of ab ovo usque ad morte, "from the egg to the apples", or the beginning to the end of the banquet) is apparently meant to mark a new twist in the Gilbert soundplan. Described by him as "evidence of change", it apparently takes forward the increased

interest in spontaneity that he developed following his work as DJ Beekeeper, resident DJ at the Discoboy club. This, his first solo album not to result from an external dance or film commission, is a forceful piece of work which sounds like nothing else around. Conducted in a register of bucolic mienca, it combines rawness and sophistication in unfamiliar ways. Gilbert is largely untroubled by the conventions of homogeneity that come into play with so much electronic music. It's as if most of his peers have to shut too much out. The juxtapositions he introduces, at times fierce and unruly, are what make Ab Ovo such a jerky ride. But it's also a lack of dogmatism, an openness to everything from clapped-out guitar pedals to high technology that gives his approach its abrasive freshness.

Ovo Mix (a picture disc, how nice) is a reduction of the entire album to one side of a 12" single, cutted out by Gilbert using a pair of CD players. It's backed with "Ovt Mix", a reduction, if you please, of the entire Gilbert back catalogue prepared for Ovt Radio Vienna, following, no doubt, Elizabeth David's observation that "flour-thickened sauces pat very easily; whereas those obtained by reduction tend to have a much truer taste". As Gilbert generally favours using samples of his own work, they end up sounding like, well, two new Bruce Gilbert pieces. Fully stand-alone, the work doesn't feel crowded, but pushes the base material into stranger and stranger shapes. "Lock up your hots", went the chorus of Wire's "Boiling Boy", here the deformation of the familiar is taken much further.

Pacific/Specific (In A Different Place) combines three Lewis/Gilbert tunes recorded for a BBC session in 1980 and a longer work produced in collaboration with artist and illustrator Russell Mills. The latter, "1920s Australia", was initially sent as a 16-track tape to a Sydney radio station and then mixed live and relayed by satellite to Lewis/Gilbert and Mills in London. Pointedly accompanied by the ensuing poorly-charged satellite interview with the lad, it's a fairly unengaging exploration of the use of diverse simultaneous inputs. For more attractive are the BBC pieces, three beautifully cracked pop tunes. Working unprepared, the duo put the songs together in a day and fashioned them into eccentric rock. One piece, "Anchors", was later redone as the 4AD single "Ends With The Sea".

in 1981, the other two are unreleased. Interviewed in *The Wire* 137, Gilbert spoke of the absurdity of beautiful melodies, a thought which, out of context, seems applicable to these rough, unfinished songs-in-process.

Fine, but the release might work more economically as an EP shorn of the Australian 'experiment'.

WILL MONTGOMERY

## Gnoua Brotherhood Of Marrakesh/Master Musicians Of Joujouka

Moroccan Trance II: Sufi sub 80515697 CD

Frank Rynne was co-producer of last year's Joujouka *Black Eyes*, and has clearly spent a long time getting to know the Moroccan musicians he has recorded here. The recordings are from 1994-5, and divide up into about 40 minutes Gnoua and 20 minutes Joujouka. The Black Gnoua are descendants of slaves stolen from the Sudan to work as soldiers under the Marrakesh Sultan. Central to their music is the gembri, a low-pitched guitar made from the leather of a camel's foot, wood and three sheep-gut strings. The gembri spins out an irresistible groove of dark, soulful riffs, complemented by large steel castanets, drumming, clapping and singing.

It's interesting to compare Rynne's recording style with Bill Laswell's production of Gnoua music on the Asoom album *Night Spirit Masters*. Laswell foregrounds the gembri so that every detail is audible, and then places the other elements carefully around it. Rynne seems to be moving about, or else the performers are moving, so that different musicians come in and out of focus. The Laswell record is very powerful, but Rynne gives more sense of actually being present at an event. Children occasionally whoop in the background, and some of the singing has the spontaneity of a passionate outburst.

The three Joujouka tracks mainly feature a group of unison flutes led by the 80-year old Majeed Majdoub, who died last year after 60 years spent playing the music of his village. By now Joujouka must be one of the best-known mountain villages in the world, and the divine effects of their fame on the musicians in this tiny place are deeply worrying. The dispute over which

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creative music quarterly

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Steve Reich: A new musical language

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## soundcheck

### Iggy Pop

Naughty Little Doggie  
VIRGIN V250162 CD

On his last tour Iggy Pop started talking about reincarnation. Throughout the world, the militants of Myanmarese Extremists trembled. Had one of their most inspirational cadre descended? Had settled life in California washed the Ig brain with New Age glow? "I want to come back as a great black poodle," he announced, "and my mistress will wear a miniskirt, and I'll jump all over her long legs." Phew.

The Iggy sound is a modern classic. It's so alert to its function, so pared-down, it cannot date. *Naughty Little Doggie* opens with "I Wanna Live" (powered by a riff so primal you think it must be stolen, but as usual with Iggy it's new — another one for Mark E Smith to lift, in other words) (*Get out of here* — Ed). The guitar sound is lush, each power chord bursting forth like an iridescent peacock's tail. The lyric is a militant statement of rock 'n' roll attitude (compare The Ramones' "I'm Not Afraid Of Life"), though Iggy is wary enough to acknowledge 27 years in the business by adding "to live longer... now to the 'I wanna live' refrain.

"Pussy Walk" is a hard swinging lust anthem, cut with the broken catwalk. Iggy debuts on *Zombie Bonehouse*. Listen to the pumping friction of bass versus lead and you're hearing an electric combo play Count Basie, it's authentic Yankee rawk in other words. *Bliss*, "Innocent World" touches the bathroom-song unconcern Horseye learned from Jonathan Richman, while "Knucklehead" is New York Dolls frenzy with better bass riffs, plus frothing guitar-pools from Eric Schermerhorn. "To Belong" is a swelling moment of philosophical reflection on the spiritual plight of America. "To belong here, I'm giving up my soul."

"Keep On Believin'" has the pile-drive insistence on limited notes that connects Evan Parker's minimalism to punk (if only he knew). Sensitive people shy away, but they should grasp that what doesn't kill you makes you strong. "Outta My Head" is a charming ribbly mantra-test that recalls The Velvets. It veers towards the one problem with the album's later tracks, echoes of the execrable "We Will Fall", the John Cale-fuelled misfire on The Stooges' otherwise classic debut. "Shoeshine Girl" is one of Iggy's "Cookie McBride"-style folk ballads. Brian MacColl caught



down on his luck in a Detroit rail tunnel with a bunch of pill-popping delinquents.

Rock stars used to be expected to progress; now they are celebrated if they simply 'survive'. With *Naughty Little Doggie*, you just acknowledge that Iggy's rock is still more directed, expressive and honest than anything the young'nt have come up with all year.

**BEN WATSON**

group represents the authentic Joujouka tradition is becoming more vocous. This is a great record, but sometimes the wider recognition of a local tradition can lead to its destruction.

**CLIVE BELL**

### Peter Hammill

The Peel Sessions  
STRANGE FRUIT SRCD136 CD

Rare among rock composers, Peter Hammill has always adopted a flexible approach to songcraft. In a sense, the studio versions that appear on his albums are still works-in-progress, often reinterpreted during subsequent live performances where intricate quintet and quartet arrangements are sometimes whittled down to spartan duets for piano/sax, guitar/violin, or even solo piano version, from the BBC archive from 1974-88.

The earliest are by far the most interesting and significant reworkings. Here, multi-instrumental arrangements

have been re-scored for solo piano, the most unexpected being Van Der Graaf Generator's "The Emperor In His War Room" from the 1970 album *H To H*, which apparently has never been played live in this version. The other highpoints are undoubtedly "Faint Heart And The Sermon" and "(No More) The Sub-manner", both from Hammill's solo *In Concert* (1974). This is an overlooked gem of the period, where frenzied Progressive rock experimentalism sometimes teeters on the brink of stylised pomposity in a maestros of multitracked vocals, synths, mellotron, organs and tape-manipulations.

The stripped down piano versions allow the memorable melodies to breathe a little easier, also highlighting the disputatious philosophising in the lyrics, the multi-layered menace of the originals is conveyed through potentious chords, angular phrasing and Hammill's remarkably expressive vocal gymnastics. Later sessions from *Over, RHT* and *In A Foreign Town* include duets with violinist

Graham Smith and the real-time use of various computer sequencing multitracks, all performed with great commitment, though none of these represent major departures from the original versions. It's a fascinating compilation and, like all of Peter Hammill's work, which bears little relation to anybody else's, will either totally enthrall you or have you stone cold. Whatever your response, nothing and nobody is ever likely to change it.

**CHRIS BLACKFORD**

### Larry Heard

Sceneries Not Songs  
Volume 7u  
PM GROUP ND10117U CD/2LP

### Larry Heard

Alien  
BLACK MARKET BMCD1 CD/2LP

*Sceneries Not Songs Volume 7u* lacks the musical and emotional depth of its predecessor, a record that marked

something of a renaissance in the cruelly chequered career of House music's most unsung hero. Considerably more upbeat, it's perhaps the closest that Heard will ever come to fulfilling the 'jazz House' tag people seem intent on labelling him with. Unfortunately, the 'jazz' that conjures up is the mid-80s version, typified by the likes of Bob James, immaculately played and produced, yet just that little bit too polished and, ultimately, slightly saccharine. There are several highly memorable melodies dotted across this collection, but the structure of the tracks poses Heard as a frustrated songwriter, who has supplied a series of instrumental versions of vocal tracks. Only on one or two occasions, most notably "Techno-Centric", do you get that sense of 'otherness', of seemingly total removal from all musical antecedents, that characterised "Mysteries Of Love" and those first classic Fingers Inc releases. Otherwise, the most telling track is the closing

"Precious Tears", which comes within it a deep sense of wistful yearning. What for, I don't know. Neither does Heard, by the sound of it.

Allen is, ironically, a much weightier affair. Ironically, because, as befits its theme of solar travel, much of the music seems unshackled by the laws of gravity, freefalling weightlessly with all the languorous grace of the orbiting space station in 2007. Working at the interface of House and Techno, and looking back towards his early electronic work typified by the *Amnesiac* LP, Heard guides us on a series of serene journeys through both outer and inner space. "Galactic Travels Sure" imagines distant planetary systems utilising viral clusters of digital sound while twinkling synths reflect the light patterns of undiscovered stars. The eerie, elastic synths on "Micro-Gravity" fluctuate both in frequency and tone as they travel from the deepest corners of the universe. The choral keyboards of "Journey To Phobos" suggest the sheer majesty of space.

Displaying a fusionist's hybrid attitude towards the compilation of sound, Heard grafts elements of TripHop, modern Ambient, even pomp rock onto his basic framework. At times it descends almost into mall musak ("Flight Of The Comet") — but the most lucid moment on an otherwise dramekko voyage is "The Beauty Of Celeste", the only vocal track, which makes you long for the damaged beauty of Robert Owens's voice — perhaps heard at its best on Heard's previous paean to deep space, "Distant Planet".

#### PETER MUNTYRE

### Henry Cow

Concerts

ISO 00221292 2CD

Henry Cow were among the first signings to the then avant garde rock label Virgin in 1973, yet the group's one and only live album *Concerts Inexhaust* (in 1975) was instigated by the Norwegian company Compendium. Virgin issued it here but, unceremoniously, and just as they did, Henry Cow's British gigs started to dry up 20 years on. Concerts — now resequenced over two CDs so as to include their long-lost session of live studio improvisations for the *Greasy Trucks* album (dubbed from vinyl, unfortunately) — seems more than just

a memoir of this great live group. Their four studio albums were exacting documents of what you could do with multi-tracking, varispeed recording and editing facilities — features they used to recast compositions and improvisations alike. Yet *Concerts* has a translucent and intimacy which their other records lacked. The improvisations here, from both studio and concert platforms alike, are wholly unfeigned and reveal how adept they were at shaping the spontaneous. The hair-raising half hour improvisation from their Oslo concert — a brooding aural nightmare developed by Lindsay Cooper's dark hewn bassoon, and brought to its climax by the banshee cries of Dagmar Krause — pushes the definition of Henry Cow as a rock group to its furthest limit, as does the Henry Cowell-angled prepared piano explorations of Tim Hodgkinson on the studio-recording "Off The Map".

Henry Cow were progressive in more than name: They'd routinely strip down and rig the mechanics of their music to keep it fresh and on the edge. The compositions here bear little resemblance to their studio counterparts — and in the case of their Marxist diatribe, "Beautiful As The Moon Temble As An Army With Banners", wisely so instead of the vacuous electronic interlude on the original studio recording (on *In Prise Of Learning*), there is a medley of features ranging from Fred Frith's Zappaesque "Ninvana For Mori", to the ultimate reading of Robert Wyatt's "Gloria Gloom", recast as the agi-pop anthem it was always meant to be. Not even Soft Machine subjected their material to such continual, rigorous self-examination.

Audiophiles will wince at the variable fidelity — which ranges from the pristine to the barely passable — yet the music has a resonance and clout that is unhampered by poor sound. For an all-revealing look at Prog rock's furthest lurch into left field there is nothing to better it.

DAVID ILLIC

### Howie B

Music For Babies

POLYDOR 525 464 CD/MC LP

Howie B is either blessed or cursed by the fact that, whenever people mention his name, the first thing they do is list the people he's worked with. The implication

is that he's not done enough himself to merit attention. *Music For Babies*, his debut solo album, aims to change all that.

Nevertheless, his production credits do say a lot about the Glaswegian's background. Soul II Soul, Tricky, Japan's Major Force, Massive Attack, Goldie, Skyslab, Mo Wax, Björk and Eno have all used his skills in one way or another, from engineer to producer. Like producers such as Nellee Hooper and Tim Simeon he's leaving the parochial dance scene and moving into big time mainstream work, in Howe's case with U2.

*Music For Babies* is that dreaded thing: a concept album. It comes complete with themed artwork, and texts by writer Michael Benson (there's supposed to be a film spin-off in the works as well), and is inspired by the recent birth of Howe's daughter Chi, continuing a theme he started in 1994 with his ten minute epic "Birth". Like much post-Hip-Hop (as Howe likes to phrase it), the music treads a fine line between self-indulgence and progressive brilliance, depending on how you take it. The album journeys the listener from the peace and warmth of the womb out into the cold brightness of reality.

Many of the tracks are Ambient-Electro passages. The opening title track shifts musical gears with the calm propulsion of underwater movement and lulls the listener into a sense of security through its hypnotic use of vibrating, rhythmic tones. It also introduces the liquid, organic sense of evolution that runs through the album. The second track, "Cry", is also beatless and is only on the third, "Shag", that Howe's trademark busted beats come in.

Howe's big trick is to communicate without words — an ability only the talented have, as the majority of TripHop's substance-problem demonstrates. *Music For Babies* gets over the emotions of birth, growth and life with rare subtlety and power.

JAKE BARNES

### Thomas Körner

Aubrite

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This year is the centenary of Viennese composer Anton Bruckner. Here's a quote about him: "Symphony No 9 is dedicated to God". Bruckner always retaining devout Roman Catholicism and certain unsophisticated 'country'

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**Gemini**



photo: Honey-Child

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Elliott Carter (photo: Katty Chapman)



### Stereolab

Emperor Tomato Ketchup  
DIOPHONIC UNIT DISKS 011 CD/CDUP

For a group so far bereft of substantial commercial success and the iconic status it brings, Stereolab are oddly easy to caricature — Burt Bacharach soundtracks *The Avengers*, Françoise Hardy joins *The Jesus*, even (most ironically and most cruelly) The Mike Flowers Pops with degrees in post-structuralism. Yet the fact that such a cluster of images sticks so vigorously is a tribute to their distinctiveness, to the way in which they have carved out a patch of pop turf that remains theirs alone. They don't sound like anyone else, not because they're great originators, but because their readings and recombinations of styles generated elsewhere are so productively disrespectful. They'll take the sunny, swirly benevolence of 60s pop found in things like Honeyboy's "I Can't Let Maggie Go" or Mama Cass's "It's Getting Better", yoke it to the hypnotic paroxysms of industrial electronics and feed both through a bi-lid or a waltz, not only do they refuse to play by the rules, they laugh at them while doing so.

Emperor Tomato Ketchup shoplifts from The Turtles and The Tom Tom Club, The Buzzcocks, The Human League, The Bee Gees and Pulp, somehow making sense of them all by rooting them in dreamily relentless Krautrock beats, technological playfulness, the queerly radical smudging of macho virtuosity, and that white-sports-car/French film gide that constitute the core of the Stereolab sensibility. Both the giddy, weightless "Percolator" and the gorgous, pulsing "OLV 26" are classic examples of what they do best, while beyond these familiar pleasures, the opening and closing tracks hint at new possibilities. "Heteronic Underground" announces a Stereolab who have discovered funk (almost shocking this, coming from one of the whitest groups I've ever heard), while "Anonymous Collective" is downright sexy.

Whatever moves they make, Stereolab's music glows with both assurance and a kind of inevitability — the first ten seconds of every track welcomes, places and endears you, and in what follows there is no tiresome chasing of novelty and surprise for their own sake. If a single groove is good, they'll ride it as long as they like, and if they find a melody of meting delousions they're not embarrassed about delivering it like some great, enhancing gift. All of which makes their reputation in some quarters as irony-laden kitch kids hard to fathom. I don't hear any trend-riding cynicism in their music at all, but a curiously trusting faith in communication and beauty. Perhaps it's their innocent inability to sheer that keeps them from the success they deserve — well, that and their insistence on calling songs "Cybelle's Revue" and "Motorcycle Scalation".

ANDY MEDIHURST

ways." Apparently no picture exists of him in the company of another human being. "To many concert-goers," writes Martin Kettle in *The Guardian*, "this music is still synonymous with difficulty and perverse length."

So is Thomas Koner an Anton Bruckner for the wired generation? This is the man who was quoted as saying, "My music becomes fully connected to my retirement from external life." There is a symphonic sense of scale about this, his fourth full length CD release on the Amsterdam-based Baroque label. A misty, unresolved chord that just hovers in the distance, a sub-bass rumble every few seconds that needs a better H-11 than mine to do justice — I can hear my amplifier grinding its teeth. A breathy, orchestral quality to the sound, and an overall smoothness that makes all Koner's work recognisable. He credits Steffen Kwasalek for the "custom made analog filters" — so there you are, he does have contact with other people after all.

I may nod off a few times during a Thomas Koner album, but I still believe he's touched with genius. I'm ready for the "TK" baseball caps, T-shirts and stickers with a suitably isolationist slogan — how about "Lost in Space"?

CLIVE BELL

### Robert Marcel Lepage

Les Choses Demmées  
AMBANCES MAGNETIQUES AH 095 CD

Robert Lepage (not the famous theatre director who brought the Miles Davis story *Needs And Gourmets* to the South Bank, the Canadian clarinettist and composer) wrote *Les Choses Demmées* for Luce Gregoire's dancework of the same name, which was inspired in turn by Paul Auster's novel *In The Country Of Lush Things*.

Scored for double string quartet with sampler, the carefully constructed classical instrument textures — from screaming harmonics to col legno (hitting the strings with the wood of the bow) — repeatedly sustain the listener's interest. The tracks all run together as a cogent narrative linked by suspended dissonance or a steady repetitive tapping, and are given self-descriptive names. "Couteaux" employs steely open strings, "Tango" uses the wooden strike of the bow to click through a surreal dance set-piece.

Auster's text reads: "These are the last things. A house is there one day and the next day it is gone. Once a thing is gone that is the end of it." The music describes this entropic ambience very well, the desolation and loss in the music echoes Shostakovich's Eighth Quartet, while in other places the driving strings sound very like Steve Reich's *Different Trains*.

This is not to say that the piece lacks sparks. On first hearing it seems fairly mainstream avant garde, but the determination and the *jeu* of the music, suggesting movement and dance, makes it a compelling, if not ultimately challenging, piece.

MARK ESPINER

### Tony Levin

World Diary

DISCIPLE GLOBAL MOBILE D001 9601 CD

Hands up anyone who thinks they can name a label with a more solid backbone of reliable music makers than Robert Fripp's DGM. Besides Trey Gunn, there's a revitalised King Crimson and, naturally, Fripp's own post-Ambient forayings. To that roster we can now add a highly rateable effort from another Crimson courtier, slackmaster Tony Levin. Forget the cast-list foreboding, Bruton, Marotta or elsewh virtuosity, for complexity in some of the cheekiest and quirkiest small group playing you'll hear all year. Levin has concentrated on impromptu duetrio jams with bodies of daunting diversity and no little imagination, comparing and contrasting his idiosyncratic fingering with a variety of minimalist and Fourth World forms.

On the Rechesque "In The Key Of Guildford" Bruford plays some of the most tasteful Simmons Drum lines imaginable to create an atmosphere of darkness and levity, with Western modal tonalities subtly worked out through African-inflected rhythmic impulses. The play with timbres is especially illuminating, particularly with Levin's ever-versatile Chapman Stick in evidence. On "Chasm" its subdued, vaguely Royal Tower-sounding plucking mirrors L Shankar's phased double-violin; it plays hide-and-seek with the koto of Brian Yamakoshi on "We Stand In Sapphire Silence", and, in meeting collaboration with Canadian percussion terrorists Nexus, creates a nightmarish farmyard of grunts, groans

and out-of-control machinery on "Espresso And The Bed Of Nails". Cleverly conceived, skilfully mixed (the overblows never intrude, retaining intimacy as well as lending colour) and smartly packaged, *World Diary* deserves more attention than it will attract in the 'Crimson solo album' ghetto to which it will be shunned in most shops and magazines. Ignore the labels, hear it.

PAUL STUPPI

## Main

Hz

BOGGARS BANQUET HEARTZ 1-6 10CD

Hz comprises six EP releases from the latter half of 1995, boxed and presented as a single piece of work. Men have evolved their sound by a process of wholesale reduction, stripping away the conventional milestones of rhythm, chords and notes, to arrive at a kind of pure Ambient noise. If there is a paradox here — evolution through devolution — on Hz Men go some way to resolving it with an astonishing series of 'movements' in sound. What can be heard in a way questions the whole process by which the listener can identify with a piece of music as different from unadorned sound. And of course, the sounds on Hz are constructed in the same way as more conventional music, but with radically different results. It is the aural equivalent of an isolation tank: it's difficult to imagine any kind of collective audience for this. If music often binds us listeners together, even if it is only the buzz of numerous different radios tuned to the same wavelength, then Hz seems to work at a far more individual level. The crackling transmissions of "Corona Part II" or the wind-tunnel effects of "Terminus Part I"

no doubt have their resonance in the listener's psyche but they're not musical ones and not easily shared.

The six parts of Hz work like a series of different, contrasting listening environments. There's nothing cosy or particularly relaxing about this manufactured ambience though. Parts I to V of "Koan", for instance, have a definite sub-equa feel, but it's one of claustrophobic deep breaths rather than bubbling serenity. In the same way as they have excised conventional structures in their music, Men cut out the 'imaginary soundtrack' element and draw you directly into the heart of an imagined area. In a sense, its conception is very aloof — rejecting all that is musically familiar — but it does also follow the quite revolutionary imperative to take music apart and reconstruct something very different from the pieces. Traversing as it does music's outer limits, pushing the definition of what music is or can be, Hz is an significant body of work.

TOM RIDGE

## Roy Montgomery

Temple IV

KOANZY KRAMK009 CD

## Roy Montgomery

Scenes From The South Island

DRUNKEN FISH OF032 CD

We've all been there. You get a new record, and after the first listen think, yeah, and? A week later, you've listened to nothing else. These two CDs by Pin Group, Shallow, Dadamah and sometime Flying Saucer Attack guitarist and songwriter Roy Montgomery fit the bill: nothing especially new, certainly

nothing either challenging or complex, but utterly beguiling.

Scenes and Temple conform to largely the same form, and though quite discrete, they share the same mood of melancholic introspection. Both see the New Zealander build up layer upon layer of multi-tracked and heavily processed guitar, with the delay settings strictly on 'Ambient'. The results are crystalline, minimalist non-riffs frequently interrupted by swathes of distorted, feedback-drenched drones whose upper frequencies glitter with barely-heard, never-to-be-repeated melodies.

Montgomery made waves in the early 80s with the Pin Group — whose debut single jump-started the Flying Nun label — but dropped out of music-making for the best part of a decade. His work since returning to the fray demonstrates a certain reluctance to play the zingiest game, though ironically these CDs could sit comfortably in any self-consciously non-rock collection of space rock.

The music's antecedents are plain enough: Montgomery's a post-punker to the core, and in common with many of the more interesting records currently flying around, both Temple and Scenes reveal traces of The Velvets (the plaintive drones and deliberately square rhythms), Tom Verlaine (the nerdy white college lad's take on the blues), Barnett-Floyd (the wide-eyed awe) and, to a lesser degree, the Durutti Column (the pop-shit take on systems music).

Yet a comment by Montgomery in a self-interview published by Popwatch magazine confirmed some of my own responses to the music. "I fear that now may be turning into a poor person's Mike Oldfield: 'The horror!'" The horror indeed, but with their undeniably sense of place and unashamed desire to

charm, Temple IV and, perhaps especially, *Scenes From The South Island* do recall the dreaded Oldfield, as well as other musicians from the more whimsical end of the British Prog spectrum. Scenes offers glimpses of life on New Zealand's South Island, while Temple IV was inspired by a visit to Tikal, Guatemala, and a night spent on the legendary Mayan temple of the title.

Of course, the travelogue has become the lingua franca of much latter-day Fourth World music, but Montgomery's music thankfully avoids the literalist photo-album approach taken by all those digger-doo-and-tadpole noodlings. Empowered by the ominously roiling guitar which erupts a minute or so into Temple IV's otherwise blissfully pastoral "Departing The Body", Roy Montgomery's journeys have a strictly internal trajectory.

SIMON HOPKINS

## Lawrence D Butch Morris

Testament: A Conduction Collection

NEW WORLD/OUTCOUNTERCURRENTS 80475 10CD

While the art of composition developed in leaps and bounds over the last century, the gestural language of conducting stayed almost rooted to the spot. Which is OK if you aspire to nothing more than pumping out staid renditions of standard repertoire, but not so when there's new music to be made from that same gestural language that is unique to the baton wielders.

Butch Morris isn't one for dogma, but he's got style all right. It resounds from this 10 CD set of live conducted improvisations, bowied with a book, that comes as close as you'll ever get to the

Z

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## Various Artists

Nuyorican Culture Clash In New York City: Experiments In Latin Music 1970-77

SOUL JAZZ SR 29 2400P

When I first heard Eddie Palmieri's 1973 track "Un Da Bonita" it was a moment of revelation. This was sometime in the late 70s, when, if memory serves, my experience of Latin music was limited to the percussion breaks — hyperkinetic passages full of cowbells, congas, bongos and timbales — you would hear on New York disco tracks by The Salsoul Orchestra and Vince Montana, and maybe the occasional use of a 6/8 samba pulse to underpin the solos on mysterious 70s albums by Joe Henderson and Gato Barbieri. Palmieri's track didn't sound anything like that; in fact, for the first seven minutes it appeared to be a romantic 19th century piano sonata as deconstructed by McCoy Tyner in the South Bronx band circa 1971; a long prelude full of grandiose keyboard flourishes and fractured chords, drenched in futuristic echo and reverbs, punctuated by stabbing blasts of brass, percussive clicks and rattles, and spiraling, altered violin arabesques from the Cuban Alfredo De La Fe. Tension was wound to breaking point during this abstraction of all the defining elements of Palmieri's music, when the track finally exploded into a burning mouton, following a fragmented percussion brass/vocal section; the sense of release was almost hallucinogenic.

When it was first released, "Un Da Bonita" was the pivotal track on Palmieri's 1973 album *My Sun Of Latin Music* (the cover of which looked like it had been leashed from an Arthur Lee record). Now it forms the centrepiece of this compilation, a précis of the radical developments that swept through New York salsa in the early to mid-70s.

Despite that weighty subtitle, these "experiments" arrived not so much as a consequence of culture clash as cultural besiege. By the early 70s, the cross-town traffic in New York was well up to speed, moving in both directions in a mutually enriching process of osmosis. Up in Spanish Harlem, the likes of (the great) Joe Bataan or Palmieri's group Harlem River Drive were singled out for fusing salsa with rock R&B. But at the same moment, salsa's use of massed percussion orchestras was pushing black funk into the kind of dense, complex lock-grooves heard on such records as Johnny Pate's *Shift In A-Flow* or Kool And The Gang's "Streetcomer Symphony".

The groups led by Bataan and Palmieri were across-the-tracks versions of *Sly And The Family Stone*, integrated, self-contained, multi-line ensembles that sublimated individual virtuosity to musical visions that reflected the social and cultural imperatives of the time. Like the music on Sly's *Flesh* album, or indeed Cecil Taylor's *Looking Ahead*, the inventing tensions that underpinned Bataan's "Latin Saru" and "Aftershower Funk" or Harlem River Drive's "Idle Hands" were

heart of Morris's art, short of actually seeing him live for yourself. His way with the baton allows real-time shaping of events that arise naturally from the interplay of conductor and instrumentalists. All that's needed is the will to re-examine and refreshen the roles of both parties into something more open and malleable.

Absorbing all ten discs in one sitting is pushing it, but play as many of these conductors back-to-back as feels comfortable (I managed seven discs in a row) and Morris's artistry becomes clear. He thrives on situations where openness and adventure are to the fore, balancing

a respect for the creative powers of his musicians with the foresight and perception of someone who has learnt to stay ahead of the game. He is also something of a traditionalist in terms of form: jagged indeterminacy is never a feature in the performances here — Morris likes a beginning, middle and end. You experience the full armory of his organisational techniques — how he can pull members of the ensemble forward and back, focus in around a particular instrumental source so as to create an instant concerto, how he picks on a small detail from a person or persons' playing and develops it into a structural

bomb of a classic conflict, with the musicians attempting to reconcile the strictures of genre convention, as well as the often stifling requirements of record labels, promoters and audiences, with a drive to capitalise on a number of diverse inputs that had begun to reveal themselves: fusion, black rock, psychedelia, as well as the emergence of an increasingly politicised US-based Hispanic population.

If that makes the music sound like an exhibit in a Cultural Studies seminar on sonic miscegenation, forget it. To paraphrase Mark E Smith on Can, these tracks really fucking move.

Rafael Cortijo's "Carnaval", for instance, is sensational for the way it combines Central African call and response vocal routines with a driving samba pulse, jazz guitar soloing, an ear-splitting conguero brass section, and the primal moans and sighs of a Brazilian *cuica* drum. In the same way, "Gumbo", by the same group, opens as smouldering piece of Latin funk, after 16 bars the tempo doubles and becomes a pneumatic samba. It then switches again into a brief 4/4 jazz pulse before reverting to a salsa rhythm and a series of brass solos that maintain a jazzed-out cool even as the percussion gathers inexorable momentum, then another switch into a heavily syncopated reprise of the opening section that envelops electric piano and guitar solos which draw on the 'progressive' music of the era: Afro-fusion post-psychelia.

Mayoral is full of moments like that: it is a brilliant introduction to some of the most energising and, outside New York at least, misunderstood music of the last two decades. I've just got one question for the compilers: how come there are no tracks here by Willie Colon, one of the most experimental, ambitious and creative musicians of the period, New York, Latin or otherwise?

TONY HERRINGTON

springboard for the whole group to build around and extrapolate from.

The credit is right — it is Morris's music, yet the ingredients he uses are always changing. Thriving on the moment allows him to ply his trade across a multitude of different contexts: some conductors use established groups as entities whose inner workings are subjected to Morris's deepest scrutiny (Maarten Albrecht Ensemble on *Conduction* 25 and 36), or as elements of larger orchestrations (on *Conduction* 17 ROVA Sax Quartet expand with the addition of loose associates from San Francisco's New Music fraternity).

There are conductors of his regular New York associates in a variety of settings (including turntable player Christian Marclay, trombonist/electronics exponent JA Deane, harpist Zeena Parkins, guitarists Bill Horvitz and Brandon Ross), a captivating head-to-head of American jazzers and Turkish traditional musicians (*Conduction* 25 and 26), and two more uniting Japan's classical players and contemporary improvisors (with and without Butch dancers). Some meetings are *ad hoc* (the Angelica Festival conductor series, the only one to have been previously aired on



Eddie Palmieri

PHOTO: ALBERTO MASTROGIACOMO

record, features the likes of pianist Steve Beresford, avant rock singer Catherine Jauniaux, No Wave percussion innovator Ikuu Mon, and European Improv heavyweights Han Bennink and Hans Reichel, others examine and develop textural possibilities from multiple groupings of particular instruments — Conduction 23, from a performance in Montreal, features a frontline of cellos and hybrid broom-cello.

Testament challenges not only conductors' orthodoxy but the very vital of music and music-making — no tradition is left untouched. Priced around £140, it is not your average casual purchase — at the very least you should badge your local sound library to get hold of a copy — but do hear it. When the musical history of the 20th century comes to be written, Testament will provide one of its most essential chapters.

**DAVID HALL**

### Abiodun Oyewole

25 Years

RYKODISC RCD 1035 CD

### Jalal

On The One  
EFA 18702 CD

The reality of black 'revolutionary' culture in the 60s awaits investigation. Accusations of cash-in and apostasy abound. The legacy of The Last Poets has been hotly disputed; here are two ex-members.

Oyewole has availed himself of the production and bass playing of Bill Laswell, while Jalal uses Adrian Sherwood and the On-U Sound posse. Some of Laswell's patented bass rifling on 25 Years recalls past glories — the wonderful stentorian dumberness that has his blockish notes stumbling over each other — but Oyewole's patronising, pedagogic vocals are mafioso. He's keen to remind everyone that The Last Poets started it all, but he's black: community-arts pace seems clumsy and lifeless after Public Enemy, gangsta rap and BYOB.

It's legitimate to expect of 'poets' that they compress into just a few, considered words, the experience and wisdom others would take longer to communicate. One couplet must have pleased Oyewole greatly, because he

repeats it interminably: "The years have come and gone, nothing much has changed/Even the spirit of man has been deranged". Given the special status of 'spirit' in this discourse, it seems unbelievable that a derangement of the spirit of man should not be an extremely serious charge. In other words, this stuff is frequently dived spoken by a tart: the 'assortment of worldly rhythms' (as it says on the b-side) provides an undyed, background to Oyewole's overweening 'advice' to fellow street brothers.

Laswell's previous Last Poets release pleased a Rolling Stone reviewer; that presumably is its real target. Pass.

Jalal's disc is a more attractive proposition. Sherwood's production is freaky-deak enough to stimulate lively improvisational emphases in his delivery, the vocals quiver freshly on Skip McDonald's bed of bluesy wah-wah and the snake-hips insinuations of Doug Wimbish's superlatively swinging bass (he was great on The Rolling Stones' tour, too). On "Children Of The Future", Jalal raps Old School Sugahhill style. Sometimes he just speaks intimately into the mic, an evil off-centre whisper in your brain. He plays with his delivery, a contrast to Oyewole's monotonous moralism. Copies and cyborg rip-offs abound, but the On-U sound still has the solid clunk of the real funk deal.

**BEN WATSON**

### William Parker

In Order To Survive  
BLACK 120159 CD

### William Parker

Testimony  
ZERO IN NUMBER CD

### William Parker

Flowers Grow In My Room  
CENTRUM 1002 CD

Contrary to the fashionable view that there is no more possibility of innovation in the arts, and all we can do is rehash past splendours, there are a few musicians determined to wing another drop from the old rag of interactive real-time music-making. The extraordinary thing about bassist William Parker is that he has played with most of them: Cecil Taylor, David Ware, Zsuzsa Kali Fastéau, Jamaal Moondoc, Billy Bang, Rashied Ali, Peter

Brötzmann, Joe Morris. He understands how often the bass needs to be a drum — percussive thunder shaking the fundiment — but can also add in bowed delirium. He's been used so often because he's got an incredibly wide palette of techniques, but also a fervent spontaneity, an interest in making the music happen, not just in sounding 'good'.

In Order To Survive features his sextet, a punchy, global outfit including the legendary Graham Moncur III on trombone and the great Denis Charles on drums. "Testimony Of No Future" is based on a Cecil-like motif, the musicians appearing to force open the harmonies in order to give themselves room to play. Nothing is easily gained; this is the opposite of facile joie-de-vivre evocation. It's shovels, shovels, movements of the earth. "Anast In Crisis Mouth Full Of Fresh Cut Flowers" is a haunting tune where Rob Brown's hurt, abraded alto sound develops a poignancy remarkable even for him, practically year-stained. "The Square Sun" shows how far you can go if you push past the ersatz beauty of air-brushed sleekness to the rugged specificities of instrumental production: Parker's bowed rhapsody — high, weeping, slippery soddles — are pinned into strange new constructions by Cooper-Moore's gospel-weighted piano, prime high-wires singing on lonesome, polluted winds.

Testimony is a 75 minute unaccompanied bass excursion recorded live at the Knitting Factory. The scrubbing and scything lose me completely, like Cecil Taylor's poetry recordings, it seems that such mistakes are the inevitable corollary of gigantic ambition in times designed to thwart it.

Flowers Grow In My Room features a free jazz big band in gargantuan squalls that recall the days of the Jazz Composers Orchestra (though less ponderously classical). The sextet of In Order To Survive fits into the domestic living space more convincingly than 20 pieces, but if you go with the concept, this is mighty exciting. Parker writes slabs of chordal event that draw heavily from gospel and jazz, but without the sense of archness that has vitiated composers as diverse as Mingus and Marsalis. Gregg Bendian (vibes) and Billy Bang (violin) lock off a series of solos that pitch skilled players

into suggestive harmonic realms.

William Parker has already shown he's one of the great bass sounds in music (down there with Flebbe Holt, Oregon and George Ouwerker). Here he shows that jazz can still be played without the defensive preoccupation of quotation marks: the basso profundo isms deliver.

**BEN WATSON**

### The Pharcyde

Labcabincalifornia

GO-0002 829 733 CD/HCP

The second album from Californian rappers The Pharcyde lacks the witty conceits of their first but displays the same musical sophistication. They remain a beacon of talent and the dim lights of West Coast American Hip-Hop. That 1993 debut, *Bizarre Ride II The Pharcyde*, fizzed with skits, pastiches of Old School Hip-Hop (*Return Of The Boy*) and an intoxicating mix of jazz, funk and inspirational brilliance that attracted listeners far beyond the Hip-Hop constituency.

Sometime after the recording, the quartet lost their talented producer J Swift. It seemed at first that Swift had shaped the group's highly individual musical direction and that without him The Pharcyde would fall into the commercial morass of West Coast rap. A depressing example of such a turn of events is Shock G, once of the fantastic Digital Underground and now plying his trade in the creatively redundant Lunk following OJ's implosion.

Labcabincalifornia shows no signs of group entropy, even though the between-track skits aren't here in the same volume as on *Bizarre Ride*, which proved that they were as talented as comedians as they were musicians. Don't let anyone palm you off with the idea that this is a more mature album either. The Pharcyde have never been mature, but the musicality on this record is less hendi, less show-offish and still comes from a rare fount of talent. Tracks such as "Runnin", "Bulshit" and "Grouper Therapy" seduce with funk, harmony and breakbeats fused together in a typically Pharcyde way. They've come up with a good follow-up to a classic of the genre. There's reason for celebration in itself.

**JAKE BARNES**

## soundcheck

### Courtney Pine

Modern Day Jazz Stories  
MERCURY 529 021 CD/LP

The UK 'jazz revival' was intimately associated with the trappings of the late 80s economic boom: suits, sophistication, Canary Wharf, yuppies, mobile phones. Now, it seems, Courtney Pine has faced up to the 90s slump; he wears sports gear, uses turntable scratchers, and is back to playing dices like the Leeds City Centre. True, the man is an affable compère, and indulges the crowd with pantomime play. At the close he proposes a freestyle rap session. But he also plays his butt off, and in Ronnie Burnage he's found a really original, sparkly drummer.

Courtney Pine's stats at soul have always seemed more like have-a-go high spirits than commercial calculation. Whereas Branford Marsalis's *Buckshot Le Fouque* obscured his jazz expertise with street posturing he has no need for — the funk comes out stiff and condescending — Courtney is a bit of a ragsammon, wears a real sound-system bass thump, and in DJ Sparky and DJ Pogo has found some truly astonishing turntable wizards. The musicians risk altering tempos and unlikely intrusions, there's the chaos and spontaneity that made the first edition of *The Jazz Warmers* so exciting.

This record is a fair enough representation of the fun of seeing Courtney live. There are the same moments when the direct emulation of Coltrane seems hollow and nave, the same breath-taking somersaults into 'out' excitements, the same attractive mix of fresh interaction and serious attention to musical event, and some excellent hard bop ("The Unknown Warmer"). On piano, Gen Allen is fine, though one misses the zany teen-disco-nerf supplied by Ahmed Imtaph on the tour. Guest singer Cassandra Wilson sounds as intoxicatingly gorgeous as ever, her instant magisterial control of the music immediately evident. Sound effects and spoken samples, the odd Soul II Soul baseline, a little Axe-style blues loop for "In The Garden Of Eden" add spice rather than detracting. Such touches do not call for any claims that Courtney is superseding jazz realism; he's just having fun with the studio like any improvisor should.

'Serious' jazz and 'entertaining' pop are equally concerned to flatter their respective constituencies and reinforce a sense of self-worth. It would be absurd to make a case that Courtney is storming the heights of technically advanced music here, but his improved mix of elements is more attractive than a long list of wannabe crossovers from jazz to pop. It doesn't exhibit the dead hand of appeal-to-conformity. In fact, he's shaping up to be our generation's Harry Beckett: If you think that's a put-down, you've been boxed up in the stuffy world of Ambient whimsy for too long. It's high praise.

**Ben WATSON**



### Pressure Of Speech

Our Common Past, Our Common Future  
NORTH SOUTH 50502 CD/LP

Most electronic music, in its various guises, deals with altered states of consciousness (drug-enhanced or otherwise) and immersion in artificial landscapes. *Pressure Of Speech*, on the other hand, deal firmly with reality. They view their music in strictly social terms, fashioning a form of aural reportage and sending back bulletins from the nether side of life to expose the (non-) workings of our modern society, as they see them.

Politically, there's little cause for joy "Backded", set against the background of a busy school playground, is the sound of children being taught to count, as bombs fall in the distance, as the minimal digital darkness seeps into your brain, it's difficult not to transpose the happy screams of these young innocents into the cries of pain and anguish that global newscasts seem to feed us daily. "Emile", a tribute to Emile De Antonio, the American anti-establishment activist, features moments of calm harmonic

silence in which to contemplate his sampled words, punctuated by bursts of percussive frenzy suggesting that it's time to translate those words into deeds. Even the three track suits.

"Motimath/Window Pan/Madam Moth", ostensibly inspired by a fascination for moths, seems to carry with it the subliminal image of unthinking individuals drawn hypnotically and inexorably towards their own destruction by flame.

Musically, however, Mickey Mann and Luke Lopex prove themselves to be sonic collagists par excellence, constructing their highly charged mindscapes from the edge of minimalist Electronica to create a prickly, edgy sound that seems to bypass your emotional receptors and insinuate itself straight into your psyche. "Topex Reality" cuts up vocal phrases in such a way as to plot a stunning path through one individual's psyche: thought processes, "First Hand" goes even further, eschewing the traditional primal response of its manic beat and threatening to disrupt the listener's own thought process through the sheer intensity of its carefully chosen sounds. "Window Pain", part of the aforementioned "Moth" suite, highlights the paradox that lies at the heart of this music: juxtaposing buzzing rhythms and sonorous, droning synths with the capabilities of stereo sound to suggest swarm patterns; it's impossible not to be impressed by the sheer invention of such a track, while being simultaneously horrified by the implications of the subject matter. That, I suspect, is a dichotomy that would appeal to *Pressure Of Speech*.

**PETER MCINTYRE**

**Run On**  
Start Packing  
MATAHOR 01513 CD/LP

### Trans Am

Trans Am  
THREE JOCOY THREEL002 CD/LP

While both *Run On* and *Trans Am* have clear links with post-rockers such as Tortoise and UI (John McEntire's studio input for example), their music is more obviously rock-derived. *Run On's* particular bag of off-kilter musical moves has as its focal point the emotive vocals of Sue Garner. As on the

preceding "On/Off" EP, the group achieve a sound that owes as much to post-punk as post-rock. The material on *Start Packing*, their first album, has a frantic, urgent quality, the product of carefully executed angularity and staccato song structures. "Tired" and "Go There" travel from post-rock confusion to kinetic, scratchy guitar and polyrhythmic drumbeats. Sue Garner's melodic voice then acts as a counterpoint, pulling the songs together. There's a tension inherent in these arrangements that draws the listener in. In a sense this is a quite formulaic, but it works. For two-thirds of the album, *Run On* successfully merge the experimental with the familiar, but it was a bad decision to share out some of the vocal duties among the rest of the group. The flat, colourless voices of Vick Brown and Alan Licht turn tracks like "Doesn't Anybody Love In The Dark?" and "Xmas Trip" into rather drab affairs. The closing "Surprise" manages to overcome this by virtue of its extended, mania-like instrumental backing. *Start Packing* is flawed, but *Run On* sound full of unexplored potential.

*Trans Am* seem caught up in the current obsession with primitive machine technology. They make great play on the use of Casio keyboards as a springboard to composition, and their debut album is peppered with various bleeps, drones and electric drum sounds. But for the most part their particular brand of instrumental music rocks pretty hard. While the slighter, fragmented material such as "Enforced" and "Technology Corner" offer up a wry kind of futurism, the master material employs thumping bass and drums and grity guitar riffs. Sometimes not dissimilar to early Pixies (without the Latin flourishes), *Trans Am* can cook up an intense row, particularly "Baldados", "Orlando" and "American Kooter". This is meddling in the inventiveness stakes but it sounds a whole lot more convincing than the more peripheral scraps of 'experimentation'.

**TONI RIDGE**

**Nicholas SACKMAN**  
Hawthorn  
NRC 00275 CD SINGLE

For some composers, the symphony orchestra is a monolithic and irrelevant relic, a beast incapable of adapting and

# A KNOT IN A GARDEN

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## soundcheck

so doomed to inevitable extinction. For others, that very monumentalism is its appeal, the source of an unparalleled range of possibilities. You want a platoon of brass, an army of strings, a vast battery of percussion? Then you need an orchestra. Nothing else will give you that glittering palette of colours.

See, isn't everything of course. It depends on what you do with it. Howthorn lasts 26 minutes, and is performed here by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis (the same team which gave the work its 1993 premiere at the BBC Proms). In his note introducing the piece, Nicholas Sadler suggests that the symphony orchestra is in itself inherently dramatic. Indeed he almost goes so far as to suggest that orchestral drama implies narrative, although he insists that shouldn't be taken to imply that the work is programme.

Nevertheless, the tension across that 26 minute span is eloquently dramatic, and controlled with a superbly subtle touch. If the means Sadler uses to generate that tension — sudden changes of volume, lurches of tempo, unexpected outbursts of braying brass and thundering percussion — are familiar, they are handled inventively to produce a work that is lovely and frequently haurting.

And that doesn't mean that the music's beauty is merely ornamental or quiescent. Throbbing beneath even the loveliest phrases is a disturbing restlessness to ensure that things never settle predictably. Sadler divides the work into three sections (it plays continuously) that he labels "fast, slow, fast", but within that broad scheme there are fine variations which Davis and his orchestra handle with grace. Even the silence into which the piece necessarily subsides contains the hint of something threatening. Don't consign the symphony orchestra to the dustbin just yet. It still has work to do.

**NICK KIRKHAM**

### Pharaoh Sanders

*Message From Home*  
Verve 529 579 CD

I must confess to being a little worried by the thought of Bill Laswell, normally such a domineering force in the studio, producing this album. Happily, his presence here is a largely transparent



PHOTO: DYNAMIC PICTURES

### Various Artists

*Whore: Various Artists Play Wire*  
Whore 2209

Whore comes over less as a 'tribute' (not usually something that yields the greatest of musical dividends), and more of an anthology with a theme. There's a disparate range of artists here, but crucially there's also evidence of some firm quality control, so while your favourite Wire tunes might have been missed about a fair bit, it's generally with positive results. Most of the artists featured have had some previous Wire connection, either through different cover versions or by way of studio collaboration.

Wire appear to have lost none of their cutish edge over the past decade and a half, if anything their currency has risen, in spite of recent clumsy imitations of their style on the part of Elastica and (ahem) Menswear. There are few similar such adherents to the original models on Whore. Lush give a vibrant, if predictable reading of "Hannibal", and The Ex-Lion Tamers break through "On Returning" as predictably as you'd expect from a former Pink Floyd tribute group. A brace of broadly Hardcore/Industrial groups are also featured. Godflesh open the record with a doomy, noisy take on "40 Verses", Kustomised brutalise "A Question Of Degree", and Fudge Tunnel round out a mucky yet intriguing version of "London".

These performances are nicely counterbalanced by the likes of Resplution with their Techno-bop ("It's A Boy") and Carl Marks's ghostly Ambient Electronica ("Eastern Standard"). There's the occasional dip towards the merely average, when slapping on the distorted vocals and echo effects isn't enough to dress up an uninspired interpretation, but generally this collection holds up well. Bark Psychosis and Lekka produce a sort of avant-Easy Listening with "Three Girl Rumba" and "German Shepherds". My Bloody Valentine showcase their familiar combination of controlled guitar dissonance and any vocals with "Map Ref 41 N 93 W", while Lee Ranaldo plumps for a short and sweet guitar thrash through "Frapp". Man, on the other hand, veer off towards guitar abstraction, creating a strange momentum with a rhythm-free drone ("Used To"). Transformer's rendition of "Outdoor Miner" is similarly ethereal, and owes much to Brian Wilson in its almost choral arrangement.

As a collection of reinterpreted Wire songs, there is a common 'identity' underpinning these often divergent styles; but it's also a collection in its own right, with a wide range of artists from the more marketable end of, er, 'alternative' music — from avant-guitarists Band Of Susans to Scanner (sung!) and the bizarre a cappella croon through 'A Mutual Friend' by Revolving Cooks' Chris Connolly.

**TOM RIDGE**

one, seemingly restricted to displaying a talent for bringing together disparate musicians that serves him so well for his various Material projects.

Which leaves my only other real problem with this album — that Sanders doesn't play enough. As with Ornette Coleman's recent *Tone Dialing*, *Message From Home* features an integrated ensemble sound. Throughout, the standard of playing is exemplary, with special mention going to William Henderson's superb piano, ranging from the impish impressionism of "Ocean Song" to the Horace Silver influence in evidence on "Necropho". Actually, that track is an interesting one, distilling a sense of conflict within Sanders himself that's apparent right across the album. The arrangement is highly suggestive of mid-60s Blue Note ambience — a style Sanders studiously avoided when he was actually there. Why he should hanker after it now is a mystery; one that's further deepened by his own concurring sax playing, which, paired with Michael White's equally abrasive violin, completely detonates the structure when it makes its defiantly abstract entrance.

Perhaps he's making a statement of identity. If that's the case, I wish he'd do it more often. Too often his own playing forms a counterpart to what's going on around him, as opposed to a counterpart. The angular swathe he cuts across the otherwise smoothly contoured funk of "Tomoko", the slithery textures flowing like liquid around and between the pointed, clipped rhythms of "Kumba" — these are the moments that stand out. On a track such as the opening "Our Roots (Began In Africa)", however, the smoothness of his sax reminds me of David Sanborn — an almost incomprehensible proposition when you consider their respective histories. Such comparisons aren't meant to denigrate the music, which is probably as good as you'll hear all year, merely to call into question the objective impression it makes on the listener.

Yet maybe the lone lycra that closes the otherwise exuberant "Country Mile" is the key. Perhaps this is the sound of a man completely at peace with himself, unhampered by stylistic or historical baggage. For this most spiritual of modern jazzmen, it would be nice to think so.

**PETER MCINTYRE**

**Robyn Schulkowsky/  
Nils Petter Molvaer**  
Haastening Westward  
ECM NEW SERIES 1564 CD

Robyn Schulkowsky is a creative percussionist with a great technique and a broad palette of sounds who has worked with Mauricio Kagel, Janis Xenakis, Christian Wolff, Lindsay Cooper, Robert Wilson and Kim Kashkashian. This record was his solo project, but producer Manfred Eicher kept Norwegian trumpeter Nils Petter Molvaer (of Mesqualeiro) waiting in the wings — a wild card to add to the percussionist's carefully prepared hand on the second day of recording. What results from this blind date is a set of duets — first takes — in which Molvaer believed they were playing completely freely. Schulkowsky, however, improvised from a set of pieces (the Beckett-inspired title work) she had written and played some time before.

So Eicher, in the role of a 50s-style jazz producer, has made a spontaneous jazz record with musicians who hardly consider themselves jazzers at all. At the album's best moments, the contrapuntal interplay of trumpet and drums is a dizzying delight. (At its worst, it sounds like, well, drum solos with added trumpet.) The individual instrumental sounds, lovingly recorded by Jan Erik Kongshaug, are sensuous and close. Schulkowsky's sensitive gong playing is a sonic treat that puts J Arthur Rank in the shade. And check out the charging, wobbly "Lullabilidys" quintuplets that drive part three, where Molvaer almost becomes a second drummer, evoking the general ghost of Don Cherry. In their own way, this odd couple can swing as well as any 50s mid-town pick-up combo — lip-smacking, tub-thumping fun in Oslo.

**JOHN L WALTERS**

**David Shea**  
Hsi-Yu Chi  
TOADK 12 7005 CD

**David Shea**  
The Tower Of Mirrors  
SUB ROSA SA 94 CD

It's books rather than films which provide the contextual anchorage for this latest brace of releases from the young American plunderer/composer

with the platters of steel and the sampling machine. Chinese books, to be precise, from the 16th and 17th centuries, so no easily-scored populist points there. But as Shea himself says in the detailed liner notes for each of the two releases, this music is meant to work both inside and outside of its source, in fact Shea has said this on virtually every one of his releases, but with these two he means it. The cinematic quality in his way of developing audio narratives has never been quite this sharp, so whether you know the books or not doesn't detract from this music's power to engross.

Hsi-Yu Chi takes its title from a 1592, hundred-chapter epic which tells of the journey of a Taoist priest who brought Buddhism to China, while "Hsi-Yu Pu", a supplement published 60 years later, inspires *The Tower Of Mirrors*. The source materials are closely intertwined yet the albums are wholly different in form and content. Hsi-Yu Chi is an ensemble work in ten movements, *The Tower Of Mirrors* is a set of 24 strategies for sampler and soloist (although the richness of detail suggests rather more than two sound sources at play). Some familiar faces from the New York downtown scene feature (including Zorn, Parkins and Robot), some of them on both.

Hsi-Yu Chi renews back on the Zorn-style jump cuts and allows itself more space and time to develop different audio scenes. The East-meets-West forays, which take in not just Chinese traditional forms but other Eastern music too, are beautifully articulated, with none of the ragged cut and paste feel that dogged 1960s *Curry Jazz* and other saloon fusion experiments. The musicians here don't allow reverence to get in the way.

*The Tower Of Mirrors*, meanwhile, cuts the surreal with the sensual. Shea recommends using the random play controls to break up the music and turn the contrasts full up (everything from 1950s and 60s TV cop show routines, through echoes of Hsi-Yu Chi's East-West crossovers, to modern day Ambient muses complete with a few twists of 70s Krautrock). Me, I'll settle for the pre-set continuity on the disc in which sampled and real-time playing combines in almost seamless, dreamlike perfection. Both highly recommended.

**DAVID ILLIC**

**Tek 9**

**It's Not What You Think It Is**  
SSR CRAMMED SSR161 2CD/3LP

Even when outwardly Junglist, Tek 9 has always expressed the Hip-Hop side of 4 Hero's polyphony. With the lazy breakbeat collages of the first half of *It's Not What You Think It Is*, Dego MacFarlane has now made this connection explicit.

Incorporating the recent *"Old Times, New Times"* EP, the first disc (of the vinyl version of this release) is populated with the son of Fender Rhodes-infested "jazzy" beats that you'd expect to find on an Acid Jazz DJ breaks album. While it might be thankfully free of the cruddy, bossa nova Braziliana that frequently accompanies such things, *It's Not What You Think* is, unfortunately, about as much fun. Dego and Mac have apparently always been fascinated with fusion, and its hallmarks have reared their ugly heads on past releases, notably 4 Hero's *Paradise Universe* album. It works on *Paradise Universe* because the rhythms were so striking that they seemed to add different shades to the synthetic warmth of the morphing Moogs. On tracks like "Is It On?" or "Mysteries Of Muse", however, Dego has not only appropriated fusion's vocodered textures, but crucially, its light funk bottom as well. The result is music that is as disposable as a Roy Ayers *Ubiquity* album filler.

Entitled "Breaking Sound Barriers", the second disc (a compilation of past Tek 9 releases) is a different proposition entirely. The first track, "The Themer", immediately wipes out the first disc's insufferable gentry with its causal violence underlining the dexter, more substantial jazz samples. The vibe continues with the monumental, buck-shot beats of "A London Summer", and the gut-busting, modulated sub-bass of "We Bring Anybody Down", while Nookie's sympathetic remix of "Slow Down" grooves as hard as Main Source or Ultramagnetic MCs. The Manix remix of "Part 182", on the other hand, reminds me of The Bomb Squad stripped of their sedimented rhythmic density, leaving only the ornery timbre of their distorted drum sounds.

The music on the second disc replays the tension that makes Hip-Hop work. Dr

Dre, Gang Starr, A Tribe Called Quest, even Digable Planets maintain some sort of distance from the game, upward mobility of many of their samples. On the first half of *It's Not What You Think*, though, Tek 9 are so lacking in humour or spirituality that I can't help but feel that the inevitable day when some Tom Scott apologist emerges on the scene is right around the corner.

**PETER SHAPIRO**

**Temps Perdu?**

**Terra Incognita**  
TIMEBASE TIME 3 CD

**IAM Umbrella**

**The Sound Of Shadows  
Breathing On Themselves**  
DRAWS & DROPS DOR 3631 CD

On *Terra Incognita*, the French-German duo Temps Perdu? make a kind of pan-global sound stew with very simple structures. "Sonoran Night" is a keening melody multi-peaked in the manner of Jon Hassell's harmonised trumpet, accompanied by desert rain sounds. Yet their music lacks what Common Ground (the art organisation) call "local distinctiveness" — tracks such as "Beneath The Surface" have the gloss of a tour brochure rather than the vividness of good travel writing, and in the more rhythmic moments you can feel stranded in an extended *Tears For Fears* intro. Their art-far blend of acoustic instruments and synthesizer washes reminded me of Martin Franklin's more focused outfit, Tua.

*IAM Umbrella* make a more satisfying kind of low-density music, repetitive or static by turn but well orchestrated compared to the other CD. There is a sense of structure to the album, which develops intelligently from the minimal opening tracks to the New Age fusion workouts of "Masque" and "Lucina Kut Cinema" (complete with nostalgic trippy flute solo by Emily C Hay). On "Revere", against a drippy aural rainscape, there is a feathery melodic motive that is close to Bacharach's "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head". Is this a genuine musical joke? Whatever, there is a musicality and attention to detail about *IAM Umbrella* that implies a hinterland a little broader than a few Throbbing Gristle and Cluster albums.

**JOHN L WALTERS**

# soundcheck

**U1**

Sidelong

SOUTHERN RECORDS 18535 CD/LP

**U1**

The Sparkle EP

SOUL STATIC SOUND SOUL 10 12"

For all the technical skill on show, U1 are as much about 'feef' as calculated musicality. They certainly have an underground pedigree, post-rock in essence (close in spirit to rising stars Toruise, though with more muscularity underpinning their idly textured rhythms), but at ground level Sidelong is a very funky album, staying on-the-one in an unselfconscious way. U1 combine rigidity with improvisational tendencies, using a number of familiar post-rock elements — fragmented synth/keyboard figures, drones and machine noise — anchored down by their fearsome rhythm section. The employment of a twin bass guitar line-up makes for a very full, solid sound: "August Song", "The Long Egg" and "Drive Towards Smoke" (from Sidelong) are simultaneously bass-heavy and fluid, big rhythmic slabs offset by an improvisatory looseness, where one bass holds down the rhythm while the other stretches out with different patterns.

Elsewhere on Sidelong U1 push things further: "The Piano" begins with a bubbling synth-bassline which is then overlaid with repetitive, minimalist cello, building in intensity before segueing into a JBs-styled breakbeat, like a jawn between Funkadelic and Michael Nyman. Quite astounding: "Painted Hill" has rolling drums and a sinuous bassline punctuated by the dropping in and out of various Ambient sounds and dub FX — Hendrix's "Third Stone From The Sun" Meets Rocker's Upown: "Golden Child" and Johnny" are more flesh in organ, on the surface at least, but both lock into a groove and swing mighty.

The "Sparkle" EP is a less visceral piece of work, particularly "The Sharpe", with its loping, mesmeric groove, but is no less compelling. A cluttered drum pattern providing the backdrop against which the twin basses freeform wildly: "Skeletons (On Fire)" is far less dynamic, featuring a rare vocal addition (see also "Golden Child" and "Butterfly Who" on Sidelong) which only manages to sound surplus to requirements. The

track is rescued in its latter half by an extended, stark, rhythmical coda.

**TOM BRIDGE**

## Various Artists

Classic Acid

MASTERCUTS CUTS 32 COMP/2LP

That exclusive, male, clubhouse attitude which dominates media coverage of dance music (and constantly threatens to remove its joy) has enforced a strict division between the austerity of minimalist House and the maximalism of decadent Garage. However, this excellent compilation of Acid House oldies — from the most assertively 'masculine' of House genres — has the unmistakable imprint of the original Garage DJ, Larry Levan, all over it.

From the Paradise Garage party whistles on Phuture's "Acid Tracks" to the wet-dream guitars of DJ Pierre's "Fantasy Girl", the claustrophobic vocals of Steazy D's "I've Lost Control" and Charles B's "Lack Of Love" (direct descendants of Bernard Fowler's caged melisma on the Levan-produced Peep Boys single "Don't Make Me Wait"), the music collected on *Classic Acid* explores the same territory between drug-induced paranoia and complete sexual ecstasy that disco-cum-Garage chartered. The difference is that Acid began to push the envelope that 'Arkore' eventually shattered.

With its title phrase and fearsome bassline, Steazy D's remarkable "I've Lost Control" re-ignited post-house dance music's most integral trope — "losing it". The thrill-fear threshold that "I've Lost Control" exploits is perhaps music's darkest evocation of release. The continuing prevalence of both its lyric ("I'm starting to lose it") sample on Boogie Times Tribe's darkcore classic "Dark Stranger", and Dan Bell's recent "I'm Losing Control" and its squelch (the frightening growth of Goa trance) suggests that its embodiment of overload is every bit as epochal as guitar feedback or gospel vocalese.

As evidenced on The Endless Pokers' "The Poke" or Armandos' "Land Of Confusion", the harsh segmentation of Acid House's beats redacts the listener's focus towards the fractal psychedelia of its 303 effects. By uniting tripping and dancing, Acid seeks to make paranoia and ecstasy one and the

same. This conflation of desire, dread, unfulfillment and release is why the enjoyment of Acid is probably even more dependent on drugs than appreciating The Grateful Dead. But, unlike The Dead, at least you can dance to it.

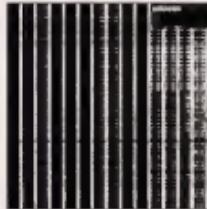
**PETER SHAPIRO**

## Various Artists

Unknown Public 06: Eclectic Guitars

UNKNOWN PUBLIC UP 06 CD/PC

There's an honourable tradition of magazines-in-a-box which, one way and another, manage a certain ingenuity in matters of presentation. Unknown Public publishes a CD and a booklet "in a plain brown box", and a sceptic might wonder why the plain brown box when there's nothing in the accompanying material (apart from an oversized plectrum)?



which couldn't be accommodated in a conventional CD booklet. That same sceptic might respond to the magazine's claim to be the "Audio Gröntrö" by suggesting that, rather, it's a kind of K-Tel of New Music. Assembling *Now That's What I Call Acid Gorde!* compilations.

As the "Eclectic Guitars" tag implies, there is a theme here, but it's necessarily flexible. The amiable vaudeville of Segeon Ono's "I Do Love You A Little" is notable more for John Zorn's fratty sax than for Marc Ribot's guitar (the piece was used in a Japanese whisky ad). And Jeremy Peyton-Jones's "sketch" from a work-in-progress, although scored for 18 guitars, is here performed on synthesizers and samplers. In that sense, it's the idea of the guitar, rather than the thing itself, that knits the 23 tracks (75 minutes) together. So we get Michael Gibbs' "Bloods Of Dust" performed by the more or less conventional chamber ensemble of the

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, supplemented by Bill Frisell's keening guitar, followed by the shrieking distortions of Nick Dikovsky's "Dead Silence" played by Doctor Nerve. The juxtaposition might seem arbitrary, but hey, let us keep the channels of communication open. And in a way there's not a lot more to say without going through the tracks item by item in the contemporary classic slot. Zappa's 1967-vintage Mothers perform "The Chrome-Plated Megaphone Of Destiny", while David Toop provides the soundtrack to your favourite nightmare with "Reverse World".

In other words, the sheer variety of what's on offer short-circuits a critical response. It is a little like a multiple-CD player in random mode. That may be an accurate reflection of how we listen, but whether the deliberate eschewal of coherence is a strength or weakness will be a matter of taste. I applaud Unknown Public for daring to exist while, in this instance, not being convinced that the whole adds up to the sum of its parts.

**NICK KIMBERLEY**

## :soviet:france:

Just An Illusion

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## Illusion Of Safety

Mort Aux Vaches

STALINPART NO NUMBER CO

In 1989 Just An Illusion arrived in a wooden box, now it reappears in a less conspicuous card sleeve. It's a measure of Industrial noise, concrete, electroacoustic, minimalism, and what we now call Ambient, but fails to yield much substance from these potentially fruitful interconnections because of a limited and/or unimaginative compositional strategy. Each piece is essentially based on looped rhythmic or textural fragments, not unlike the click-track process that mainstream rock adheres to. Over this the group cut-and-paste tape/sampled material, nearly always similarly looped. The approach soon wears out its welcome, and potentially interesting sonic textures are seldom explored in much detail or with much purpose. Several pieces incorporate mutated ethnic string and percussion elements, though the results are never as surprising, emotionally engaging or as



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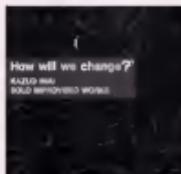
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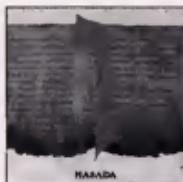
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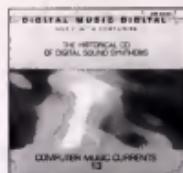


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### Frank Zappa

The Lost Episodes

Hybriddisc RCD 40571 2CD

Frank Zappa was the Anthony Burgess of music. Arrogantly capricious, masterfully prolific, confusingly inconsistent and liable to bring out the best and worst in all who come into contact. Like AB, FZ created far too much to fit into one critical theory — even one as open-ended as Ben Wilson's 'poodle play' Time is too precious to absorb the whole canon (even when you don't have to buy all your own records), the long Traffic-like "Sharienes" (with Don 'Super Can' Harns on violin), which in different versions has appeared on four Zappa albums I've never heard in my life, was completely new to me.

At first glance this appears to be for FZ archaeologists, a 3D track car-boot sale of an album with inane conversations, schoolboy R&B, rehearsal tapes and out-takes. Despite the clever sequencing and tight track editing, repeated listening is recommended with a finger close to the CD skip button.

Most of the material comes from Frank's wild years (1958-72) apart from the dated singalong of "I Don't Wanna Get Drafted" (1979) and some synthesizer snippets. "Basement Music #1" sounds remarkably like the four-track stuff Neil Ardley was doing at that time (1978) when similarly limited in access to musicians and studios. There are alternative, early versions of "Inca Roads" and "Any Way the Wind Blows". Zappa's folk song arrangements, "Wedding Dress Song" and "Handsome Cabi Boy", provoke speculation about what might have happened had he recruited Dave Swarbrick instead of Jean-Luc Ponty. These last two tracks are let down, like many late 60s Mothers tracks, by leaden drumming.

"Mount St Mary's Concert Excerpts" and several cues from *Ruri Home Show*, the cowboy movie Zappa scored in the early 60s, show his orchestral vision and his ear for audio thrills went well in place before the advent of Frankford provided the ideal frame (and amphetamine) for his musical and personal ambitions. "Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance" (minus the iconic, chromatic crooked triplets and lyrics) is a groovy piece of West Coast jazz that may still earn Frank some posthumous heavy rotation on the most conservative jazz stations. Some of this adds substance to the theory that Zappa was basically a jazz composer who exacted a terrible revenge on the establishment by making novelty pop songs and selling vast quantities of albums. Certainly a lot of other elements (noted if that's not too pretty a word) early on — the charm, the humour (both dry and wet), the relentless perspicacity of stupid people, and general fascination for boozers, burns, non-entities and beer.

Musical highlights include Bruce Fowler's trombone solo on "RNDZ1", the relaxed blues jam of "Ur Clawon Shuffle", and "The Big Squig" — the 43-second electroacoustic soundtrack to an award-winning commercial for Ludens' Cough Drops — prove again that humour is an essential component of advanced music technology (cf Kraftwerk, Negativland, Achter Twin).

Statistically, Zappa may have made more truly awful music than, say, Lou Reed (or any number of 'serious' and 'jazz' composers), but he has made a lot more good, original work. New listeners shouldn't start here — in the final analysis this is a record for Zappa's diehards.

JOHN L WALTERS

skillfully assembled as Roberto Musci and Giovanni Venostas ethnic collages, also from the late 80s (check out *Messages & Portraits* on ReR), "Ascend A Fall", easily the most satisfying and atmospheric track, adopts a less rigid approach, by using echo effects to create an unpredictable, free-floating sense of development that breaks out of the usual structural repetitions.

The finest CD by *Illusion Of Safety* (aka Dan Burke and Kurt Griesch) is a provocative blend of Improv and

Ambient. Two tracks at approximately 25 and 30 minutes respectively, both are entirely improvised and make extremely sensitive use of field recordings and electronic sound-processing. The first opens with fragmentary avant-piano set against gravel-metallic noises — tiny sounds amplified until they become all-encompassing and disturbing. Thereafter, the dynamic range is mostly reduced to subdued, expansive drones and murmur, punctuated by distorted chimes and cymbals. Sometimes there's

just a hair's breadth between sound and 'silence'. Like the work of AMM, Morphogenesis and Organum, Mort Aux Vaches takes an environmental proportions as it seeps imperceptibly into your urban landscape, passing cars, even those muffled clangings on my roof, with their Evan Parker impersonations, were determined to be part of the overall sound design. Listened to on headphones, you become more aware of Burke and Griesch's marvelous timing and pacing as you hear the even trill,

submerged sounds — pops and crackles, tremulous metallic resonances, half-head voices, a finger rubbed across a stylus. As Peter Ubu's David Thomas once sang: 'The smalles details, the finest points, they all add up.' One of the most quietly moving albums I've heard.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

### in brief critical beats

Peter Shapiro ramped recent drum 'n' bass and TripHop

#### Blood Sugar

Levels (Innervisions)

CD-R PCD007 12" **Slack Jaw**

Belly Earth HMD 12" **Twig Bud**

**Presents** Harry's Law (Innervisions) EXCLUSIONS HMD010 12" Three examples of the new austerity. Unsurprisingly, Andrew Weatherall's puritanical, frequency-modulating collaboration with David Harrow as Blood Sugar is as groin-numbingly dour as a Mary Whitehouse dinner party "Big Belly", the new 12" by ex-Forgermaster Winston Hazel as Slack Jaw, is nothing but stomach-churning, knock-your-wind-out bass kick and itchy-scratchy percussion noises. With its an-rhythmic rhythm, "Big Belly" poses the same paradox as Public Enemy's "Welcome To The Terrordome", but without the latter's ferocious paranoia or messianic intensity. In other words, without anything to make it interesting.

Meanwhile, "Harry's Law" from Peter Ford's *Twig Bud Presents* project takes TripHop to its sepiotic, sexless extreme "Day Off", though, employs the kind of (ux) Kraftwerk keyboard loop that's used as incidental music for cheap skin flicks to re-create the liss of leisure

#### Cold Mission

The Remixes (Innervisions)

CD-R PCD008 12" **David**

**Wallace** Expressions Howling Shadow Shadow 71 12" Two releases that epitomise Simon Reynolds's "Aqualy" nightmare. Aquash's mix of *Cold Mission's* "Guest Spots" gives much of the music's space over to a warping Moog pattern that draws out the remarkable Reistedt All-Era drum break. Label boss Nu-Era "return breakbeat to its low tempo roots" with a beginning, share-heavy, Techno mix of "Drugstore Rude Boy" "Expressions", meanwhile, is all texture and almost no rhythm. Despite its



Vince Guaraldi-style piano riff and the sub-Alex Reece simplicity of its break, "Expressions Part One" is the better half because you can actually dance to it. With synth noodlings and a beat that wouldn't be out of place on an 80s Steve Winwood MOR ballad, "Part Two", though, is utterly reprehensible.

**DJ Food** *Refined Food* (Nineteen 70, 2011) After the brilliance of Colcud's *Journeys* (DJ mix album), this comes as an inevitable, underwhelming disappointment. On paper, the roster of megastars (including Flula Brasilia, Autecite, Dr Rock, MLO and Ashley Beedle) looks great, but the proofs in the grooves and most of them fail to deliver anything other than what you'd expect. Highlights include The Herbalists' nubla-bla-bla-blazzoria mix of "Mella," Wagon Christ's E-2 listening send-up of "Turtle Soup" and Squarepusher's drum 'n' bass re-interpretation of "Scratch Yet Herd," whose rolling drums without the beats might be the ultimate in hyperspeed as desolation. A rhythm made up entirely of the constrictions and electronic triggering, it's only a matter of time until the cult of breakbeat minimalism gets so refined that it goes the way of Robert Ryman and someone presses up a blank slab of vinyl and calls it *music*.

**DJ Krush** *Meiso* Remixes: *Ho wo wo* (DJ 42 12/CD). Despite the presence of DJ Shadow, who has recently descended into the maw that his found-sound formula always threatened, the noteworthy mixes here are 4 Hero's shifted emulification and DJ Cryst's bare-knuckled knock-about. Cryst's mix reproduces the choked, asthmatic atmosphere of the original with its clenched rhythm track and burn-out dynamics. Although 4 Hero's "Natural Ingredients" mix doesn't go with the flow of rappers Black Thought and Mark B (of The Roots), its sardonic link between aspirational keyboard lines and the mercenary monetanism of drug dealing is as bleak a social commentary as Sly Stone mocking his integrationist anthems on "Thank You (Fallenin' Me Be Mine Bf Amin)".

**Elementz Of Noise & MC Det** Stick Up sound of the UNDERGROUND SOUR 027 12' Despite the fact that you've probably heard the break a thousand times before, "Stick

"Up" has a simplicity and clarity of purpose that lifts it beyond the purely generic. Beginning with the mutated horn sound familiar from Roni Size's "It's A Jazz Thing", the music is quickly stripped down to its bare essentials as MC Det commands, "Quit the bullshit, it's a stink up". Its fierce minimalism has a utilitarian expediency about it that's so crass it's perfect. As we Americans say "No fuzz, no muss."

**Immortal Minds** Voodoo  
Culture references over 1:38-1:21  
"Voodoo Culture" features a break not  
desmar from the one used on  
Squarepusher's DJ Food contribution  
over 1:20-1:21 bassline and clipped rhythm,  
which sounds like the machine gun fire  
from a cheap video game, marks the  
internalisation of ragga's "booyaka,  
booyaka" vocal gun play. The moment  
when the girl's voice comes in saying  
"Release me", is as frightening a fusion  
of sex and violence as the Rolling  
Stones telling us that love was "just a  
shot away".

**New Kingdom: Mexico Or Bust** (out Sept. 12) From its Bar-Kays horn chart honking over Bivin Style-style boogie guitar riffs and Motown-esque whistles, "Heebo Or Bust" is a Spaghetti Western set in Shurt's New York. The narrator raps about "piratas and costoles in the sand" in a voice as gruff as Warren Gates' stubble, turning a fantasy about fun in the sun into something much more sinister. The flip, "Infected," is an arresting marriage of drunken slide guitars, cowbell percussion and feral scratching that picks up where Kid McDonald's Little Axe project left off.

**Red Snapper** *Mooring EP*  
MAP 70127. **Bullitnus** *Piping*  
PICK 028 12" Along with the brilliant  
Knader & Dorfmeister, Red Snapper and the Park Recordings posse are clearly  
the class of the downtown funksters. Red Snapper's "Son Of Moon" mixes up a Louis Prima bantone saw with shap-  
joint keyboards to create a wonderfully  
squall environment. "Get Some Sleep  
Tiger," however, is a verbatim rendering  
of the kind of funk music for existential  
anti-heroes that made the world  
grateful to Isaac Hayes. Although  
Bullitnus' "Ping" is a bit lackluster, the  
B-side, "Feathered Eyes," is exemplary of

the Pork formula. For all the polish of its ambience, "Feathered Up" has an edginess almost wholly lacking from the genre. The Middle Eastern blues of the female vocals work with the hillbilly guitar and cheap sax to create a decadent feel totally removed from the Mike Figgis-style jazz clichés of "Get Some Sheep Sheep".

## in brief outer limits

Biba Kopf hurtles around the margins of recorded sound.

**Aube** Magnetoelectricity 600  
FACTORY NUMBER: cd John Cage  
described the body as an aetheric  
chamber alive with the rhythmic rush of  
blood. His theory was taken up with  
gusto by the industrialists, who ripped  
the body apart to release the noise.  
Using magnetic resonance spectroscopic  
equipment, Aube's Akutam Nakajima  
now has a way of tapping the flesh for  
sound without piercing it. Now some  
modern primitives might argue Aube is  
some kind of chess, seeking gain with  
pain and all that. But out of the  
recorded flows and pulses he's  
constructed four pieces every bit as  
queasy as Throbbing Gristle's hidden  
masterpiece *Journey Through A Body*.  
Not quite the fantastic voyage Aube  
evidently perceives it to be — the  
drone sounds and scenery are in the  
end too limited, despite the close  
synthesis he subjects them to — it's a  
fascinating experience nevertheless.

**Beequeen** *Sugarbush* (aum 312) Euro 20.00. The post-Industrial Ambien zone inhabited by the Dutch duo Beequeen is normally so clouded with paranoia that their transparency arouses suspicion. They wear their hearts on a gorgeous honey-yellow sleeve emblazoned with Joseph Beuys' dedication and a rack of familiar songtitles, like Presley's "Return To Sender" and Ned Diamond's "A Beautiful Nose". Are they being perverse or are they just ditsy? As it happens, the titles bear little relation to the slight, yet pleasurable muggy freefalls and cartwheels their music turns through. But the compositions are so lacking in ambience, the one question they

arouse is how their makers found the wherewithal to release them.

Loren MazzaCane

**Connors** 9th Avenue forced expose! block a/c Some guitars are bon lorners who seemingly suffer the presence of others badly. The disappointing recent duo album MazzaCane made with Key Hano would suggest they were like poles, whose presence in the same room inhibited, if not repelled the other. We Hano-whores assumed MazzaCane was the problem. His short, desultory 9th Avenue CD proves us wrong. Brimming with fizzy invention, it's a thoroughly absorbing solo work, kind of to-fu-freppertonic trickery without the fuss, fife and tape delay effects. Instead, MazzaCane dia-llocks his guitar with the overtones eddying around his dragging root-notes. And at 29 minutes, it's one of the few discs here to actually leave you wanting to hear more.

DJ Carhouse & MC

**Hellshit** 12" £10.99/£12.99 PPI 5522 12" (CD) Recorded live at London's Disobey, the EP from Japanese turntable maestro Otomo Yoshihide and Boredoms' vocalist Yamasuka Eye might raise the issue of the purpose of staging a Dada nursery this late in the 20th century, where shock is just another entertainment option. But hell, the excitement of the music is its own reward, and it easily withstands the heard-it-all-before jabs sometimes hurled at the club. Granted, Eye's shenanigans come across like the squawks of a scatter-brained Donald Duck, but the way he choreographs his utterances to Otomo's quidire, genre-slapping noise orchestrations, embracing everything from Seafra through new lounge-Ambient to sludgecore, is positively graceful.

**Erik Friedlander** *Chimera* (AVANT AVANT) CD New York-based composer Friedlander has put together a perfect quartet for these sombre endings: himself on cello, accompanied by bass, bass clarinet and clarinet. The opening track, "Alullivan" is extremely promising in its low-end subtlety — all slow-slop, bass-spring coiling sounds tangled together like a Chinese puzzle. Later, jazzier tracks like "Single Whip" and the merrily Oriental "Chimera" show off his



## John McLaughlin continued from page 32

But like few of his contemporaries, he seems willing to address the outer limits of today's technology as willingly as he did those of yesterday.

"I did an interview for *Down Beat* and I told them what a great musician I think Prince is," says McLaughlin. "I still think he's a genius. I had Ronny Jordan come up to me after the same interview in which I hadn't been too kind to him, advised him to loosen up, get less commercial or something, and he was pissed! He said, 'I love over, you've had your day, it's our turn now.' Well, maybe. I'm an old hippy, but I want to hang around and find out exactly what's going on today."

Perhaps it's a measure of how all those years of critical opprobrium have consecrated the image of McLaughlin as unrefined, a clean-cut has-been, but it's vaguely amusing to hear him talking this way, to even equate him with any manner of exploration into the new; for instance, he takes enthusiastically of how he insisted that he travel to London from Paris not by plane but by Eurostar ("It's brilliant"), and refers to the fact that the cover of the new album is a stereo image ("I'm an old hippy, remember?"). Maybe so. But if the likes of Howe B and Vinny Reilly have anything to do with it, McLaughlin the old hippy is welcome to hang around as long as he likes, and he can go on playing as fast as he likes. The question, though, has to be asked, why so fast?

"You have to go back to my formative influences again," he explains. "I heard Coltrane play, Pharoah Sanders. Sheets of sound, they called it, just so many notes I wanted to play like them. Listen to Miles playing live in Stockholm in 1960. On the CD there's an interview, and the interviewer asks Coltrane why he plays like that, he can't understand it. But Coltrane can't explain it, nobody can. But lots of us listened to these guys, took Coltrane as a role model, and in the 60s, if you wanted to get to be the best or to get work even, you had to play fast to keep up with people. It's a benchmark. You feel you have to measure up. You have to get your chops right to please people, because if you don't, you're in trouble, they'll find you out. But of course, there's a danger of becoming too technical. Either that or you fumble. It's a fine line. But every generation has its own standards. It shouldn't always be just about speed. With me it just happens to be the way I play."

"Anyway, it always guitars that get characterised as being 'too fast.' It's just the image of the guitarist, like bass players are always defined by how funky they are, and saxophonists for how 'out' they might be." It feels like McLaughlin is glad to move the subject away from guitars. "In the end you can really talk too much about picking technique and right and left hand positioning."

McLaughlin's outlook on life betrays a conciliatory internationalism and openness which mirrors the delicate miscegenation which his music rests on. He now lives in Monaco and regards Europe as his home.

"I moved from New York in '82," he says. "Frankly, I missed the linguistic diversity of Europe. I suppose I just got fed up of hearing English all the time. I don't come back to England much now. What really passes me off is this Anglophonic arrogance, this English-speaking domination of the world. I built my way in German, I built my way in Italian because it's not English and I enjoy that and others enjoy it because it shows you're making an effort to speak their language and accept it and them."

"England I don't care too much for anymore. London's OK. But elsewhere..."

He looks to be having a good enough time in England now. Fans are bursting out of the unlikeliest corners, and despite the silverying of his hair, he looks at 53, ten years younger, immaculate and at ease in his trademark white turndown. He exudes the unostentatious comfort of the new moneyed middle class of mainland Europe. But with McLaughlin comfort doesn't mean complacency. His music may have found a new audience, but he knows these things go in cycles, that the new generation of musicians who acknowledge his legacy are the natural outgrowth of a preceding generation that sought to bury it.

"It's life. I've been at rock bottom, and now I'm up. Who knows what'll come next? It's the way it goes. You can't expect music to stand still because your life doesn't stand still. It doesn't always reflect your life, doesn't always change like your life changes, but it does change. It's got to. There's always the promise of something new, good or bad. That's what the title means: 'The Promise.' You don't know what it is, but you know there's the promise of something different around every corner." □ The Promise is out now on Verve (through PolyGram).

## Mixmaster Morris

continued from page 43

I suppose I should be able to work out who this is singing. I don't recognise it. Cue?

### A group from Switzerland.

The Young Gods. I knew they did some of these songs, a couple of Kurt Weill songs, it's interesting to compare [Weill and Brecht's] fortunes. Kurt Weill did pretty good in America, Brecht did pretty terrible. He didn't do a lot of work when he was in America, he was too busy getting investigated by McCarthy. I have an LP of the trial. I have the most ridiculous collection of East German records and I got them just in time.

I have a whole box full of Ernst Busch 7's called things like "Thank You Soviet Soldier" great title. [Morris leaves the room and comes back with a stack of East German albums that he starts sorting through enthusiastically.]

I have boxes and boxes of this stuff: Dessau children's songs, which is what you used to have to sing at East German schools. The one's got "The DDR is Twenty Years Old", "Hello Brother From Warsaw". The thing with the songs is they're not written for bloody opera singers. I hate to hear Theresa Stratos or Rosa Wiltscha-Trexlere massaging these... [Morris starts pulling out more records]. That's a fascinating East German album. 30 different versions of "The Internationale" including Robert Wyatt. That's the original 1928 Threepenny Opera with Brecht singing some of it.

### How did you get into Brecht and Weill?

Two things. One was reading [Brecht's] poems, which are about the greatest poems ever written, really blew my head off, and another was hearing things like Henry Cow — it was obvious that they had a non-rock, non-jazz music source that was not aware of at the time. I didn't identify it as Eisler, but when I heard Eisler's stuff I thought, "Yeah, this is where it's coming from." Then when I got to study the Eisler songs, I found there were hundreds of songs of which there were no English translations. I won't say I had to learn to speak German, but for some of them I had to do my own translations. It was a pretty hard project to reconcile with the burgeoning Acid House movement, but I have continued it — I use Eisler themes in *Dream Fish*.

### What did you reckon to The Young Gods?

## treatment of the material?

Well, I don't know what Brecht means to Swiss people, they are from the German end of Switzerland aren't they? I was interested in The Young Gods because any band that was using samplers in the mid-80s was interesting to me, and they were finding their own context for sampling. I like the idea of appearing before a rock crowd and making guitar noise without having guitars on stage. But whereas dance music has taken [sampling] on, rock music hasn't. At least [The Young Gods] aren't another Front 242 clone. I always heard them was on German radio and a guy said, "Were you into electronic body music?" I said, "No, I was always into electronic head music."

## THIS HEAT

### "Metal" from *Repeat (These)*

The sounds like Bow Gamelan in London Docklands up to their necks in water. I have a tape of Bow Gamelan that sounds identical to this, but I guess one of drum sounds pretty much like another. Is it some other prominent metal bashes? Actually it sounds like the place at the back of Cold Storage [a South London studio] where This Heat used to go and beat the shit out of metal. Is it the Repeating thing? In fact I've bashed these pieces of metal myself. [Laughs]

I never saw This Heat record — I tried to. The studio was a real hotbed. Robert Wyatt was recording down there, and Chris Cutler and Tim Hodgkinson, all the Henry Cow people, and HipHop people and reggae people — all sorts of weird stuff going on, all fusing off each other.

This Heat were one of the most exciting live bands that ever existed — just totally brilliant. It doesn't really come across on their records how brilliant they were, maybe "Health And Efficiency" is the closest to it. They integrated tape and live music in a way that no one else ever did before. They were doing analogue sampling before digital sampling was available. I saw a very bizarre thing. This Heat supporting U2 at the Hammersmith Palais, and Charles Bullen riding around on a unicycle playing the guitar while people threw bottles at him.

In [post-This Heat group] Camberwell Now, the third guy, Steve [Rickard], used to have a stack of tape recorders with loops on, 12 tape recorders or something, and he'd have them going

through a bank of morse code keys, so I'd punch them in and out. That was a really fantastic way of using pre-recorded music. I think Charles [Hayward's] singing was a bit much for most people. I saw Charles playing at some squat thing a couple of years ago, where he spent his whole set crawling around on the floor playing with squeaky toys and pretending to be a baby.

It was through This Heat that I first heard Fele Kuti. They would never go on stage without playing the music beforehand for at least an hour. If there was a DJ on, they would always get him off. Hearing Fele loud through a big PA, especially the really long pieces that go on for half an hour, was a really big influence. It was through Charles Hayward that I went to that Music For Pieces Of Wood concert. He was there too. [Moms] then disappears and comes back with a dozen This Heat live tapes.

## PETE NAMLOOK & TETSU INOUE

**Extract from "The Invisible Landscape" from 2350 Broadway (Fax)**

This is nice but I don't know what it is. It's Pete Namlook and Tetsu Inoue.

Tetsu introduced me to Hosono from YMO. Fax have just made their 200th album this month — they're not all by Peter but he's probably on half of them. [Looks at sleeve] Oh, this is 2350 Broadway. Tetsu's address in New York, which is a cool title. Then when they made one in Peter's house they called it 62 Eulengasse, which is Peter's address in Frankfurt. There is always a reason for things on Fax; there's a reason for the colour codings and stuff. If you've got nothing better to do, you can worry about it!

I guess I'm partly responsible for Peter being known in this country because I talked Rising High into releasing his albums. Silence particularly. At the time they were saying, 'Oh no, this has got such a limited market'. When it came out it was a huge seller, and it's still one of the best albums he did — it was obvious a lot more work had gone into that one.

[Namlook] used to be a jazz musician and he's going more and more towards using acoustic instruments and doing more work with classical and jazz musicians on Fax that hasn't been widely heard. I must say I indulged my Krautrock fantasies in Dream Fish,

because I always wanted to pretend I was half of Cluster for a weekend. Who doesn't have such fantasies?

**Do you think that Namlook's prolific output gives fuel to the argument against Ambient, specifically that it's easy to just churn it out by the yard?**

Well, I'm sympathetic to both sides of the argument; for consumers it's extremely irritating, but I believe it's the musician's prerogative to make as many albums as he feels like [Namlook] is in the Guinness Book Of Records as the most prolific artist — he's taken over from Psychic TV. I mean Sun Ra made 400 albums, but that was [the consequence] of not being on a record label and having the complete freedom to do what you want. [Namlook] had been through the industry and had a bad problem with it and said, 'Fuck it, I'll do it entirely my own way'. Everybody said it was commercial suicide, but he's got a very nice studio and Fax Records are successful all over the world.

## CAN

**"Mushroom" from Togo Mogo (Spoon)**

[Immediately starts laughing] I actually saw Can on Top Of The Pops in 1976, when "I Want More" was in the Top 30. In the back of the mind I'm sure that I did. Somebody will probably write and say they weren't actually on.

I once did a set in Germany when I played no end of records that sampled Jaki Luberto's breakbeats, because there were a lot of them. As far as the Germans are concerned, he was the original Funky Drummer. What's he up to?

**He's playing in London in May.**  
Should be worth seeing. I quite fancy Jaki Luberto versus Charles Hayward, actually. Did you hear about the drum battle with Guigou Chenevier from the Recommended band Etron Fou Le Louban? He had a drum battle at this festival in France, Rhômes or somewhere. And the other guy beat him, so Guigou drew out a gun and shot him in the middle of his solo! Musician's jealousy. He didn't kill him. He was part of this band that Charles had in France, Les Batteries, with about four

drummers. They did an album on a French label. It's got a Harry Partch cover version on it! [Moms laughs] ... then goes off to get his copy of the record]

Something that influenced me more than Can was "Cool In The Pool", which

Holger did in 79. EMI, in their wildest fantasies, thought it was going to be a hit single. When I heard that I thought, 'OK, this is how it's going to be', because there's thousands of edits, French horns, opera singers, all that stuff drops over it, complete anarchy, a tour de force.

I did a gig with Holger Czukay in the summer. He just showed his films and did a lecture, which was really funny. He's done a lot of home made videos, very home made, with him crawling around his garden on all fours and his wife with a camcorder. You know the "Blessed Exorcist" record, with the Pope singing? He's made a video of that and they've montaged him and the Pope. They knelt down and pray together and Holger's hand slips out from under his coat, and pinches the Pope's wallet. If you're going to blaspheme then do it big.

You see, blasphemy and heresy have always been a natural proclivity for me. Something not a lot of people know — and you'll probably think I'm joking — but I'm a descendant of Copernicus. My family name used to be Copernicus, so heresy comes naturally to me. [Laughs]

## ORNETTE COLEMAN

**"Sleep Talk" from *Of Human Feelings* (Antilles)**

[Immediately] Oh, I love it. This is "Times Square"? No, the same album.

**Yes, it's "Sleep Talk".**

This is one of the funkiest Ornette albums. I've just subscribed to the Hermetology Making List on the Net, and I've just got [Coleman's new album] *Tone Daling*. It's really interesting, it's got a rap track, and a Bach chorale arranged for guitars and drum machine. You'd never guess it was Ornette. I played it at some chill-out room and said, 'Guess who this is?'

**You once did a cut-up mix of "Times Square": have you heard John Oswald's *Grateful Dead cut-on Grayhounds?***

I haven't heard that one, I've got the "Plunderphones" EP. Yeah, I was totally into Oswald, Negativland and all that sort of stuff. I thought Oswald's best piece was the Michael Jackson picture [on the cover of "Plunderphones"]. [Laughs] Michael Jackson's head on a nude model, the sleeve of *Bad* cut with a porno shot. Michael Jackson with breads and puddings. It was a full page in *Mondo 2000*. They got some serious letters about that one. "Our lawyers want to talk with you."

## THE MASTER MUSICIANS OF JOUJOUKA

**"Your Eyes Are Like A Cup Of Tea" from Brian Jones Presents The Pipes Of Pan At Joujouka (Point)**

It's very good, whatever it is. It's not The Master Musicians Of Joujouka? Is this the Brian Jones one? There was some campaign going on [when the Musicians played in London recently] they were picketing the gig. Moroccans outside saying this is a rip-off, claiming the musicians never got paid for [that] record. Brian Jones produced the record with some very obtuse phrasing.

[This is] brilliant — sounds like a loop from an Oval record I haven't been to Morocco. I might be going to Egypt soon to do a party. Techno's spinning around that part of the world. Israel's got an active scene, a lot of the Goa scene's spinning to Israel, to Egypt. The Goa people are now setting up in Mozambique and Vietnam and Peru and that's helping to spread the germs. Do you check out indigenous music when you're travelling around?

Well I don't get to play in Third World countries that often, I guess it's coming more and more. But what's going to happen when serious music technology arrives in Africa? If it's happened I still haven't heard much output from it yet. Paris, I guess, is where it ought to be happening because that's where most of the African music gets recorded. Ten years ago they were starting to get really good production on King Sunny Ade's albums and things like that, and it seemed something was happening there, but African music seemed to lose the plot at that point — or the Western marketing of African music lost the plot — so I don't really know what happened after that.

I thought rai was a very interesting music, and there are definitely House rai clubs in France. I'd love to do a remix of Cheb Khaled or somebody. They use the same instruments as Techno in a totally different way. To be honest, I'm more interested in Greek music because I lived in Greece for quite some time. Greek children will happily dance to 9/8 over here they have difficulty recognising 4/4. I did some tracks mixing Greek music with Techno that never came out. It's the sort of thing that Black Dog have done, they've expanded the media, done tracks in 7/8. I'd like to compile a Techno album with no 4/4 in it whatsoever. □

# new notes at a glance

## information from SPNM

### \* 2 The Voice in the Machine II

Godfrey\*\*\* J Green\*\*\*

Haynes\*\*\* Stones\*\*\*

Michael Tippett Centre, Bath

College of Higher Education,

Neasden Park, Bath BA2

01225 463862

### 2 American Connections

Simaku\*\*\* Fowler\*\*\*

Philibos\*\*\* Knots\*\*\*

McGinn\*\*\* Corp, RR Bennett,

British, Copland JSS

### 3 Music Past and Present (2):

Mishfield Ensemble

Williams, Hughes\*\*\* JLT

### Towards the Millennium CBSO

Stravinsky, Messiaen,

Stockhausen RPH

### 4 A Celebration of Bernard Stevens' 80th Birthday

Stevens

Royal Hall, Royal College of Music, Priory Concert Room, London SW7 071 499 8567

### Jazz in the Fifties

Nancarrow arr Miskinoff, Zimmerman, Cage, Monk, Evans/Davis\*\*\* QEH RPH

### 5 Nash Ensemble

Rawdon\*\*\* de Falla,

Gerhard, M Berkeley\*\*\*

PR RPH

### 6 Steve Reich 60th Birthday Concert

Reich JLT

### 7 Love on the Rocks

Aperghis, Lee, Bens, March, Spitalfields Market

Open, Old Spitalfields Market,

Broadfield Street, London E1

071 247 2555

### CBSO: Bernstein in the Fifties Bernstein

Symphony Hall, Paradise Pierc

Birmingham B5 0221 212 3333

### 7-10 now you see it

It Mochaver,

Fripp, Gabriel, Tsoo, Toop

QEH RPH &amp; PR RPH

### 8 BBC SO Schnittke,

Shostakovich RPH

### 9 Sound Art 96:

Concert I

Sotila, Ferneyhough,

Xenakis, Connolly, Cage,

Butcher/Rutter\*\*\* Ross CY

### CBSO: Bernstein in the Fifties Bernstein

Symphony Hall, Paradise Pierc

Birmingham B5 0221 212 3333

### \* 10 SPNM / BEAST

rumours...96

### Four New Works

Grosser\*\*\* Dibble\*\*\* Rose\*\*\*

Kommern\*\*\* Berio, Moore,

Tenaghi, Schaeffer, Alvarez

rec. Curve Hill Park,

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### Brunel Ensemble

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Williams\*\*\* Cage BMMC

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Stravinsky, Nordström,

Sandström\*\*\* Nordström\*\*\*

PR RPH

### 13 Smith Quartet

various

CMN Tour

### 14 Lontano Ensemble

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### Towards the Millennium: CBSO

Martinu, Shostakovich RPH

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Warren\*\*\*

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Bristol 0117 921 0359

### Guildford Choral Society: Loyd\*\*\* RPH

Sound Art 96:

Concert II

Butcher, Improvisations CH

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Stravinsky, Varèse,

Mozartian, Adas, Bratt Hall,

Paradise Pierc, Birmingham B3

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### 18 Nicolas Hodge, 18 piano

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Pritchard\*\*\* Feldman

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### 19 Philip Edwards, clarinet & David Ewin, piano

Carpenter, Sweeney\*,

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### 19-25 Purcell Revisited

Parcell, Bryars, Rudden, Guy,

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### 21 Tubalé Bouston, Newland\*\*\* Adler,

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### BBC SO

Takemitsu

RPH

### 23 SPNM Music and Film with Michael Kamen I

various, Volar Rec, RPH

### 23 Sound Art 96: Concert III

Ferneyhough, Dolden\*\*\*

Parkin, Beresford CH

### 24 Music Paet & Present (3): Brunel Ensemble

Payne, R R Bennett, A

Williams\*\*\* Flintley,

Tooley, G Williams, JLT

### Dulwich Choral Society & The Ruskin Orchestra

Hinde, Snell\*\*\* JSS

### 25 La Dolce Vita: Guildhall SO, Robert Ziegler

Morricone, Rota, Meacagni

QEH RPH

### 26 Celebrating Variety: British Clarinet Music

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King\*\*\* Birthele,

McBrien\*\*\* Bowen, BMMC

### BBC SO

Takemitsu

RPH

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0171 242 8932

JLT: Jacksons

Theatre, 269a

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London N6

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JSS: St John's

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London SW1

0171 222 1061

PR RPH:

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Royal Festival Hall,

London SE1

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NEW WORLD PERSPECTIVES (PKO) £14.99

Self-styled Canadian terminal theorists the Krakers (or K2, as shall henceforth call them) find a lot of Strange Things (cyber things, virtual things, intermettes) to comment upon as they beatle up and down the highways and BUY-ways of American cultural life. The trouble is, they have reduced their own previously rigorous theoretical modus operandi to a kind of bumper-sticker epistemology

In and out of the passenger lounges and parking lots and green rooms they flicker, victims of the inevitable spaciousness of a successful life on the Cultural Studies lecture circuit. And most of *Hacking The Future* is pretty much what we expect these days from one of our premier Cultural Studies tag teams: is that the problem? That none of these analyses go beyond what we expect? You get a feeling of smug dogma rather than any genuinely spontaneous snapshots of the world in action. K2 just don't relish their jargon barrage — don't somuch log on those various FutureHack appellations and prefixes (cyber-, virtual-) bog us right down in them. They've got their One Big Idea — a cyber future for all, one nation under a virtual groove — and anything/everything they i-SPY goes straight into its FRAME, with no room for theoretical loose ends, for differences or divergences.

I really liked some of their previous paradigm-shift work, particularly a collection called *Paric Encyclopedia* — a post-alphabetic description of the actual disappearance of facts — which was really saying something, and something new: a fittingly devout series of reactions to our monstrously

unpredictable culture. *Hacking The Future* is a purposefully slim volume — trivial mappings, would-be aphorisms, pseudo-poetic sketches, with an accompanying spoken word CD: a liminal trace-work of observations plucked out of the surveillance as. But it's hard to know when K2 are being purposefully trivial, or when they've just carelessly, unconsciously let their Paradigm Slip show through (and a skimpy affair it is too).

After 130 some pages of micro-thoughts about malls and UFOs and genetic grafts and robo-mothers and Amerikkka TV, we get to their Heavyweight Theory Finale. Now, it's one thing to string your radars — sorry, readers — along with a sound-type, trolley-hop, skin-flick skim-read, but you're on different territory when you proposition us with sentences like "Hacking the future is our historical destiny in an age in which..."

The minute this stuff stops being a kind of strobe-light, second-generation, McLuhanite Style Guide to the 90s, and bags our indulgence as a heavyweight manifesto for global comprehension it, falls a part, because even as style reportage it's out of touch.

In the rear view mirror you can just make out the faces of real philosophers, as the Krakers point their mobile home away from Hegelworld and toward the portals of Jonathan Ross Land. The K2 cyber revelation/revolution — Technology as Destiny, basically — is too gib. It rests on a dodgy sense of History as some kind of seamless crossover from one "epochal" moment or model to another: a straightforward narrative progression in which there seems to be no room for doubts, detours, refusals, about-turns. K2 see One Direction for us all and one

only. (An impression enforced and heightened by the accompanying CD of Kraker spoken words soundsaged by Ambient synth-wooshes, which gave me a queasy feeling of... oh-oh, here comes The Tablet from the cyber-Mount.)

As they tick off all the rad fads of the 90s they have to strain to plug them all in to their Global Vision LinkUp. This is a (big) topic I want to deal with elsewhere and at proper length — this reinstated presumption of Community everywhere and at all times. The K2 version of it ends up like one of those sick banking ads aimed at 16-25s which offers a grab-bag bribe of CDs, movie tickets, clothes, etc. a sugar-pill ethos of Shopping Yourself into a better/better Future. In a sense K2 offer us little more than shopping for cyber clothes — a tragically 'hip', which is to say doggedly conventional, notion of Youth Culture.

Hacking reminds me of that point in the 80s when Jean Baudrillard decided he was such a break chic star that he could release/reinvent/rehack any old Polaroid pop-thought notebook and it would be swallowed up. And it was — along with his repuation.

Like Baudrillard, K2 set out to anatomise the 'alien' strangeness of the USA, but have seemingly been narcotised by their overexposure to Mall culture: the very scenario they set out to critique. In a version of what one might call the *Kids Leave Home* syndrome, they have found a new lease of (middle, playing with all that greasy post-Pooh kid's stuff) — replete with its grating tone of hey, kids, we (too) can talk about rave music and Es and Scanner too. But what they actually have to say about these things is too obvious. (When their Scanner piece was published in *The Wire* 144 as a live

Elvis



review, it worked. But to leave the uncanny Scanner body idling at the level of Gig and — yet again — projected 'community' of cyber despots is to do it a grave disservice: it is so much more interesting/interesting than that!

Like Baudrillard, they have some interesting observations, but they do tend to get all excited about things that are really rather old hat in Pop Culture circles (it's obvious they know very little about youth culture, between, say, 1969 and 1986.) They get all theory-expansive about strange mutations on the landscape which I and a lot of other readers (will) know from punk years and before. Unlike the sheet of writers around, say, US mags Spin and Artforum (William T Vollman, Dennis Cooper, Greg Tate, Greil Marcus), they have no sense of precedents, of human mess and inter-referentiality.

The world is a much stranger, variegated, resistant, unhinged, bizarre place than K2 think it is, and I also think there's going to be a lot more resistance to the coming Information Technology 'revolution' than they do — and that some of the marginal scattered tribes may turn out to be a far more interesting proposition than the homogenous Internet club.

They're a nice pair of pilgrims, K2, and they who knows we'd probably all get along like a paradigm on fire if I met up with them for beer and cultural chit-chat. But, I always loved something Paddy MacAloon said about the vanglorify of trying to 'keep up' with youth cult infections and minutiae. He said — I'm paraphrasing — "I don't want to be the sort of embarrassing adult who walks into a roomful of kids and says, 'Hey! Anybody got any F\*\*\*?"

*Hacking The Future* is a book of *IAH PENMAN*

## Living With The Dead: Twenty Years On The Road With Garcia And The Grateful Dead

By Rock Scully with David Dalton

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY \$49.95 £17.99

After so many tedious tomes of Grateful Dead lore, long-time manager Rock Scully's ghost-written epic on the life and strange times of Jerry Garcia et al should be welcomed by anybody who is even remotely interested in what

powered this American institution for so many years.

Now that the group has decided to call it a day out of respect for their lost leader Garcia, it seems unreal that they survived through so many of the personal and personnel upheavals recounted in *Living With The Dead*.

Scully and Dalton paint an affectionate portrait of the group as a set of freaky individuals who were happy together but ultimately as alike as chik and cheese. Bass player Phil Lesh is portrayed as a wine-chugging intellectual, forever young 'Bob' Weir is withdrawn and suburbanite, while Bill Kreutzmann and Mickey Hart fit through the story but mostly remain hidden behind their respective drum kits. Jerry Garcia comes over as the group's unwilling guru, a grizzled guitar genius with a big heart who eventually burned out on a drug-dazed trail of his own making. The other major casualty here is Ron 'Pigeon' McKernan, The Dead's first keyboard player, who, unlike his colleagues, preferred a hit of Wild Turkey in the solitude of his own room to a paper cup of acid-spiked Kool-Aid — a lifestyle that caused his early death and blew a hole in the group's sat that was never properly repaired. Pigeon was an important part of The Dead's early sound, but later, when they were experimenting with drugs and psychedelia, he lagged behind his colleagues' technicolour musical vision. Perhaps this is why The Dead's earliest records never really got off the ground when they entered a recording studio. "God, we make shitty records," moans Garcia at one point, after laying down the scraps which would eventually emerge as

*Aoxomoxoza*. It is the sense of creative frustration that haunted much of their studio work, and, as the book underlines, it was only on the road when The Dead shone like the dark stars they really were.

Like most reader stories, Scully's memoirs of his glory years with the group are plump with tales of magic, mayhem and madness as he recounts how the 60s erupted into an inferno of drugs, free love, rock 'n' roll, hype and sizzle. The Dead's early sets at Ken Kesey's Acid Trip festivals are documented with the kind of passion that puts the reader in the front row. Promoter Bill Graham is exposed as a

shameless hustler and capitalist exploiter who crowds his Fillmore venues with (Dead) heads and then charges them top dollar while treating them with little respect. Another great insight is Scully's portrait of acid king Owsley Stanley, who convinces the group to move with him to LA, where they crash at his LSD factory while he feeds them a diet of red meat, milk, and eggs. Eventually the combination of acid saturation, carcasses hanging in the freezer, and cops hammering on the door becomes too much for Garcia and company, so they slip back to San Francisco and relative sanity.

As an entertainment, *Living With The Dead* provides numerous similar amusing and amazing anecdotes, but as a test to draw the mystified newcomer towards The Grateful Dead's music, it falls somewhat short. What musical descriptions there are here remain to the point and are mainly hung around song titles, or other artists and styles of playing, which is acceptable because this is more a biography than a book of music criticism. But it would have been instructive to include more about the group's creative passion, rather than cram in one more tale of wild-eyed drug debauchery. Thus said, Scully and Dalton's test deserves to be stacked against Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Kesey and Babb's *On The Bus* and Joel Selvin's *Summer Of Love* for future reference on this extraordinary group of misfits and the era that created them.

**EDWIN POUNCEY**

## E: Reflections On The Birth Of The Elvis Faith

By John Straube

RAST BOOKS (PRK \$9.99)

If you're a regular reader of *The Wire*, chances are that you're not a fan of anything. You love music and your life would be poorer without it, but you're not a fan. Can John Coltrane, Gavin Bryars, Goldie... well, they have enthusiasts, even devotees, but not fans. From certain perspectives, fans are easy fodder for ridicule, irrational, duped, shrill, unduly hormonal, swept along by marketing, enslaved by sculptured cheekbones rather than impressed by complex time signatures. Fans are fickle, shredding those Sean

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## print run

Magure posters to replace them with upside Down Fans are gurus (a category not confined to the biologically female). Fans don't care about music as music — it doesn't matter if Boyzone can't sing, in fact it may even be an advantage, because the fetish of musicality may get in the way of the profounder sources that underpin the journeys of fandom: fans employ music as a metaphor for half-thought-out feelings of identity and desire, as a code through which to lock themselves into particular social, sexual and cultural affiliations, as a passport to facilitate escape from the mundanities of everyday life.

Drawing parallels between fandom and religion is hardly novel — the very language of fan culture is saturated with religious terminology (worship, idol, cult, shrines, fan-stics) — but few have taken it as far as John Strasbaugh. A New York journalist with a sharp eye for the catchy conceit, his book speculates that the veneration of Elvis Presley, particularly in the years since his death, has all the makings of a new faith, and he isn't shy of arguing this in deliberately outlandish terms: "Just as Jesus and his cult began as Jews, Elvis and his cult are starting out as Christians".

He writes of Elvis, Elvis, Elvis and Elvis (Presley impersonators), and while some of this is evidently tongue-in-cheek, he does build an intriguing case. Out there in the neglected backwaters of America, among the kind of people who watch *Roaroman* to marvel at the elegance of the decor, in the culture Strasbaugh caricatures as "low class, white trash, trailer-parky, hillbilly and kitschy", there are plenty of Elvis fans whose devotion to the man, his music and their meanings has begun to topple over into nascent delirium. This may not yet have taken the concrete shape of organised religion, being "entirely innocent of an articulated theology", but the seeds, it seems, are there.

Strasbaugh wisely refuses the easy option of satirising the ill-educated gullibility of such views, pointing out instead that in a society as obsessed with religion as the United States, in the particular context of a swelling millenarian boom in fringe faiths and quack cults, the worship of Presley is no more ridiculous than many other beliefs that have taken hold. The bare facts of Presley's life, mysterious enough during

his lifetime, are, among the faithful, undergoing a posthumous mythologisation, being edited and moulded to fit the story they are increasingly being required to tell. His birth and childhood can, with only a little twisting and a lot of determination, be turned into a virtual re-enactment of what is supposed to have happened in Bethlehem centuries earlier. "Vernon [Presley's father] would declare that on the night Elvis was born he had stepped out on the porch and beheld a heavenly sky-blue light pouring down from the sky over Tupelo". Such Elvis/Christ parallels (and the book offers plenty more) are manna for hardcore Elvisites.

Nonetheless, it's only a wild-eyed minority of Presley fans who have taken that route, and Strasbaugh's book does suffer at times from an over-eager attempt to stretch his material too tightly. Still, there is some fine, even moving reportage here, following the annual candlelight procession that takes place in Memphis to commemorate Elvis's death, marvelling at the unexpected intensity of tribute concerts where unlikely Elvis can suddenly attain mythical status, and detailing the sheer indispensability of Elvis in the fans' lives. Extreme and at times alarming though their fanatism may be, the Elvises do at least have one irrefutable point on their side: Presley *did* change the world, he was the absolute and unarguable epicentre of massive and irreversible cultural change, and no other pop star could claim as much. If any singer deserves deification, he's the obvious candidate, and besides, he had a much better haircut than Jesus.

ANDY MEDHURST

### Modern Music And After

By Paul Griffiths

CLarendon Press (Hbk £15/Pbk £12.99)

The publisher's blurb is almost right — this is "the definitive study of music since the Second World War". For "music", though, take care to substitute "Western art music" or "contemporary composition". The book first appeared in 1981 as *Modern Music: The Avant-Garde Since 1945*, but a better title for this much-revised edition, which brings the story right up to 1995, would be *The Avant-Garde And After*.

It's certainly definitive within this remit

— chronicling "the late modernist adventure" of Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen and, with input from John Cage, their postmodern progeny. In the 50s and 60s, Boulez, Stockhausen, and in a different way Cage, had enormous influence on that specialised body of composers trying to continue the linear development of modernism. Griffiths does well to capture the ferment of that time. Boulez in particular wanted to destroy what he saw as a monolithic European musical culture. In 1967 he declared that opera houses should be blown up — at about the time he was preparing to conduct in them.

By the 70s the epic project was finally abandoned — except, maybe, by heroic figures like Brian Ferneyhough and the New Complexity. Serialism was recognised as one method among many in a pluralistic postmodern universe (you've heard the story). But Boulez and Stockhausen had an enormous impact, not only on younger figures — Ligeti, Birtwistle and composers at IRCAM — but also on the later work of Stravinsky and Messiaen. This is Griffiths's main story, and he tells it well.

John Cage gets as much attention as Boulez or Stockhausen, and he was never a modernist, nor even a composer in the accepted sense, but, as Schoenberg said, an "inventor of genius". Beginning with Cage, the American arts tradition of what Michael Nyman called "experimental music" is discussed — Harry Partch and Conlon Nancarrow, and later, Morton Feldman and minimalist Feldman, the discoverer of a gentle, 'directionless' minimalism, supplies some great quotes. "Stockhausen... asked me what my secret was. I don't push the sounds around." Stockhausen mumbled this over, and asked: "Not even a little bit?"

Griffiths is particularly good on the development of electronic music, from its beginnings in Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète* of the late 1940s. Stockhausen's move here — this really was the "Darmstadt madness" — was to control timbre and so *sense* it like pitch. Milton Babbitt moved into the studio out of despair at inaccurate performances of his incredibly complex scores. These motives are so far removed from contemporary sampling approaches, it's no wonder there's little communication between the protagonists.



Griffiths himself is not so good at making connections with other kinds of music: he mentions Stockhausen's prestige among some rock musicians, Zimmermann and Henze's love of jazz, and Messiaen's use of Indian modes, but not a lot more. But then, the "late modernist adventure" was hermetic and insulated. (For Boulez, Asian music is to be admired because "it has reached a stage of perfection". But otherwise the music is dead.) With the exception of American minimalists, more popular composers don't figure in Griffiths's story. Conservatives like Brumel, Tepper and Copland are hardly mentioned (though Shostakovich is). Neither, strangely, are European and Russian minimalists like Gorodz, Ustolskaya and Kancheli — though Scelsi is well discussed — or younger British composers like Mark-Anthony Turnage. Because he's so insistent this music — and has a passion for the "dust of the dry" like Gorecki — Griffiths doesn't find its history puzzling enough. He's hardly ever judgmental in a rare negative comment, George Crumb's music is dismissed as "dated", but dismal works of Cage's later years like the instrumental studies are praised. There's no suggestion of unevenness or failure in a composer's output. But orotund is not really the aim here, and it's a magnificent achievement to get 50 years of music history into 300 pages, with such lucid and engaging writing. 'Definitive' is the right word.

ANDY HAMILTON

# multi media

Rob Young meets Tod Machover: hyperinstrumentalist

**T**od Machover draws few distinctions between being a composer and being digital. As a research professor in music at Nicholas Negroponte's MIT Media Lab, Machover has been given free rein to shape a range of computer-driven instruments for the wired generation — he calls them hyperinstruments — in an attempt to put the user firmly back at the controls. This month, visitors to London's South Bank will get a first chance to glimpse these augmented instruments and radical interfaces at Cultural Industry's Now You See It festival.

The initial stages of Machover's project were received favourably by a number of top-dollar musicians including Yo-Yo Ma, who eagerly adopted the hypercello, and  $\frac{4}{4}$ , who immediately ordered up one of Machover's sensor chairs (a device that uses electric field sensing, kind of a supercharged theremin) to use on his last tour. Machover has also written a keyboard piece called *Bounce*, in which a digital piano analyzes what the performer is playing, and creates its own accompaniment, adding phantom keyrokes.

In London, Machover will preview the prototype for his new baby, the Brain Opera. This ambitious project takes the notion of 'audience interactivity' several clicks forward: a full performance of the work consists of public spoken and sung input through a 'maze' of microphone-based instruments, a baseline creator in the form of a video 'dicing game' ('You have to steer to be in the right place at the end of the four-note pattern; if you don't, it keeps looping') explains Machover, and a central performance space which combines pre-composed elements with the audience contributions, plus sound samples that have been transferred to the venue via the Internet. An important piece

of hardware in this recombination process is Machover's digital banjo, a piece of sensory technology that is highly receptive to the expressive subtleties of actual body movements.

Machover explains: "If you take an existing instrument and wire it up, the biggest problems are that you need an awful lot of technique on that instrument to play it well, and also it's a big engineering job to measure all the information that comes out of it — they weren't designed to be measured that way. The disadvantage of the theremin-type thing is that, although it frees people up to do things, it's actually quite difficult to get extremely good at an instrument that doesn't have any physical feedback — you don't have any physical limits, or anything to touch or push against, so it's all a bit vague. The initial idea of the digital banjo is to combine both things: You can point at things with it, you can throw words or notes up on a screen and select them quite accurately. It's designed with a strange material that one of my team found: it's sort of rubbery but also firm and translucent, and we can actually mould it so that there are sensors inside the wall through the rubber. It's designed to be like squeezing or kneading dough, with tiny accelerometers that also measure the hand gestures."

That Machover's prepared to get his hands dirty by taking such an interest in the very stuff from which his instruments are to be built demonstrates a far-sightedness well beyond the composer's historical role as distant shaper. As a student under Elliott Carter in the mid-70s, writing scores that were too complex for human ensembles to perform, he was forced to look towards computer-assisted methods of music making (loops using analogue synthesis and



tape experimentation — too old-fashioned). In those days, composition software was still seething, but now in the connected environment of the Media Lab, isn't there a danger of being swamped by having too many options at his disposal? "Just this morning I woke up and lagged on, and I had a whole flurry of e-mails from my technical team asking questions about materials should we push this button here? I wanted to say, 'Leave me alone, there's so much music to write!' So much has gone into these instruments, they've sort of taken on a life of their own. I feel like running back a horse and saying, 'Look, the instrument's gone far enough, now let's get the piece done and see if it works'."

"I think it's always important to remember you're doing all this for a reason. Technology has developed so fast, there's an awful lot of it out there that people haven't figured out what to do with. You have to make sure that everything you spend time on is going to make somebody's life a little better, not just be a gadget."

When I call up Machover at his home near the Media Lab it's 9am his time, yet he appears to have been up and about for several hours already. This particularly American brand of hit-the-ground-running, 'wired from the get-go' lifestyle, which informs much of the MIT ethos, is a far cry from the dry, academic air Machover was breathing in white at Pierre Boulez's IRCAM centre in Paris (1978-84). "At IRCAM there was definitely the European classical tradition," he recalls. "They would invite

people like Stockhausen or Berio, and even the younger generation, Femøyhough the 'great artist' who would know nothing about the technology, or only a little. That person would give instructions and there'd be an army of assistants who would go and make the music for you. So there was the great artist at the top of the head, and everybody else scurrying around to realize that vision. MIT is the other extreme kind of a research or thinking approach: I look immediately to this idea of designing the environment that I was working in, and being able to change that from project to project."

The tension between malleability and compositional hegemony looks like being the Next Big Problem for composers like Machover to unravel. As he says of the Brain Opera: "The whole structure is pretty much determined in advance. There's a story you experience all these fragments of the individual people that show up, or the music you've heard in the lobby or from the internet. The idea is that these fragments can turn into an integrated piece of music in front of your eyes. And the trick is getting the right balance between the structure we put in ahead of time, and how we preserve the freshness in each performance. It's incredibly hard to get that right." □ See Soundings for details of this month's Now You See It festival. Brain Opera receives its UK premiere in Edinburgh in August. Tod Machover's website can be found at: <http://casr.mit.edu/groups/casr/index.html>

# david toop

Further adventures in modern music



Alice Coltrane

If you read this column then doubtless you can intimate from all the cable TV references that I don't get out much. Benevolent press persons still make the odd, even very odd, attempt to lure me out to shows and showcases but I find my enthusiasm for the live experience has been sapped to a dribble. I have been trying to schedule Michael Manri's *Hear!* just to see what mainstream critics mean when they talk about "ambient cinema", but squeezing a three hour film into the cracks between work and the school run is proving more stressful than a Los Angeles shoot-out.

So call me an isolator. Things had reached such a terminal pass that a mundane morning of visiting West End record shops turned out to be a real shocker. The last time I ventured up or downstairs -- rarely ground

floor -- to comb the dance shops must have been in the days before dance went broadsheet and merchandised. You know, when dance music was so romantically, obscurely, penituously underground?

You walked into a dance record shop to find hundreds of 12" singles, racked up and labelled in similar fashion: "No Mas Dub", Latin Poker, Blow Me Records 54-99. Feel like hearing Latin Poker and you had to elbow through a Great Wall of China of DJs, counter lounging, seemingly idle for perpetuity, then shout over nauseating sub-bass in order to hear a ten second burst dropped into the mix. Many is the striker in which I have invested, solely due to an absence of bottle when confronted by this human stockade.

One could be forgiven for forgetting that all was onwards and upwards in dance retailing, what with dancing being the main preoccupation of the nation's youth, allegedly. To the contrary, descending into one of these shops has acquired the taste of what it might be like to melt into a Kathryn Bigelow movie. Some of them seem to stock no records. Just a counter, behind which stands one glowing individual in charge of apparently nothing.

Perhaps this is the future attitude retailing. You pay a certain sum just to stand in the archival memory of selling solid objects. Those who make their crust from the dance business will have many explanations for this phenomenon, no doubt. I have a few ideas myself: the wholesale transfer of dance into new zoning rules governed by club brand names, hypermarketing and an indifferent over-underground of chemical beats, post-punk Acid Jesh Winkery and that Dave Clarke Techno-person (uncanny how the career of 90s Dave Clarke hangs on a bass drum, just like 60s Dave Clark. I wonder if 90s Dave will end up producing West End musicals?)

In this mystery of shops without product, let us not forget the iconic significance and economic insignificance of vinyl. A teacher friend of mine took a 7" single into school to show her class, presumably to play an infant version of that baffling "Guess the Gadget" feature they do on Live TV's *Sex Show* (heh! so that's why I don't go out -- watching trash TV in search of downmarket thrills!). Not a single child could identify the plastic disc with a hole in the middle, though one ventured that it might be some kind of strange CD. That gives a nice time measurement of vinyl's passing. Surgically quick, in other words.

Vinyl is on display in other shops, and I needed backwards from the shock of hearing an Alice Coltrane album I once sold after listening under the effects of alcohol to her wagged-out version of

Stravinsky's *Firebird*. Oh woe is me: 20 quid, a note too big to welcome this eccentric item back into the fold.

Alice came to mind a few weekends back. In Brighton to do a reading from *Ocean Of Sound*, I was asked at the end of the evening why I had not included more women in my book. There's just Kate Bush, complained my nemesis, and she's a singer. More than a singer, I might have said, better not singing, even, but that theme was best left unsung. On reflection, the singling out of Kate suggested a reading of the back cover rather than the interior text. Never mind, criticism by omission has its place in the hermetic world of books.

Though it bounces into territory fruitfully explored in *The Sex Revolt* by Simon Reynolds and Joy Press, there are interesting issues to be raised here: masculinity and technology, for example, or open listening versus rigorous (whether improvised or composed) organisation. "Where are the great female sonic wizards?" asks *The Sex Revolt*. "Hmmm?" replies Professor Gary Stockhausen. "How about..."

How about Alice Coltrane, a "problem person" who some of us have been revisiting with increasing frequency of late? Problem, that is, because like Yoko Ono, she was appended to a Great Man, so gaining kudos by association and vilification for her influence on his (posthumous) art. Not to mention a penchant for lawyers who have yet to visit the spatial mansions of the *Most High Paradise*. With a fresh burst of cultural anxiety in the air, the admission that Alice can be musically more appealing than her late husband risks the attentions of a high art hitman. But there it is: *Universal Consciousness* is a unique concept, as they say in Hollywood. Fantastic playing from the likes of Jack DeJohnette, Rashid Ali and Jimmy Garrison, demented organ playing by Alice, bizarre string charts. Uniquely horrible, some might counter, but I think her music can be shining on a level that goes deeper than kirsch. A sonic wizard.

HO NAZARETH filmed her in her Los Angeles temple a few years back for her *Bombay And Jazz*. The scene looked like something out of *Ed Wood*, or Shri Shri Martris solar temple, set on a southern Californian cliff-top in a sick 66 film called *Hopper*; that notwithstanding, the music retained the same relished, otherworldly groove of "Oh Allah" and Huntington Ashram Monastery. I see Alice's picture in magazines now, advertising the CD issue of her back catalogue. Which means, inevitably, that royalties from my £20 will soon be contributing to her mystic temple fund, rather than keeping the secondhand, Rare Groove emporia of Soho in business. Ethics and Implications? Discuss □

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